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Security Council

Seventieth year

Provisional

7527th meeting

Wednesday, 30 September 2015, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Lavrov	(Russian Federation)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Chikoti
	Chad	Mr. Mahamat
	Chile	Mr. Muñoz
	China	Mr. Wang Yi
	France	Mr. Fabius
	Jordan	Mr. Judeh
	Lithuania	Mr. Linkevičius
	Malaysia	Mr. Aman
	New Zealand	Mr. McCully
	Nigeria	Mrs. Ogwu
	Spain	Mr. García Margallo
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Hammond
	United States of America	Mr. Kerry
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Ms. Rodríguez Gómez

Agenda

Maintenance of international peace and security

Settlement of conflicts in the Middle East and North Africa and countering the terrorist threat in the region

Letter dated 1 September 2015 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2015/678)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Maintenance of international peace and security

Settlement of conflicts in the Middle East and North Africa and countering the terrorist threat in the region

Letter dated 1 September 2015 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2015/678)

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I would like to warmly welcome the Secretary-General, Ministers and other distinguished representatives participating in today's Security Council meeting. Their presence today underscores the importance of the subject under discussion.

In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Algeria, Australia, Austria, Belarus, Belgium, Brazil, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Denmark, Egypt, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq, Israel, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Libya, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Montenegro, Morocco, the Netherlands, Nicaragua, Norway, Pakistan, Poland, Qatar, the Republic of Korea, Saudi Arabia, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, the Sudan, Sweden, Switzerland, the Syrian Arab Republic, Turkey, Ukraine, the United Arab Emirates and Uruguay to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following to participate in this meeting: Her Excellency Ms. Federica Mogherini, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy; His Excellency Mr. Nabil Elaraby, Secretary-General of the League of Arab States; His Excellency Mr. Iyad Ameen Madani, Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation; and His Excellency Mr. Abdulaziz Al-Ammar, Permanent Observer of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf to the United Nations.

I propose that the Council invite His Grace Archbishop Paul Richard Gallagher, Secretary for Relations with States of the Holy See, to participate in this meeting, in accordance with the provisional rules of procedure and previous practice in this regard.

It is so decided.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2015/678, which contains a letter dated 1 September 2015 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, transmitting a concept paper on the item under consideration.

I now give the floor to the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon.

The Secretary-General: I thank the Russian Federation for organizing this very important meeting, and I take this opportunity to express my deep thanks to the many Foreign Ministers who are participating in this meeting. The number of participating Foreign Ministers is impressive. I hope that this kind of solidarity will always be with us as we address the many subjects with which we are seized.

The Middle East and North Africa are in the midst of some of the deadliest conflicts and worst humanitarian emergencies of our times. Terrorist groups, such as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and Al-Qaida affiliates, are elevating the horror and complicating the search for solutions. While each is very different, the crises and conflicts in Iraq, Libya, Syria and Yemen all expose similar horrors. The situation in Syria has proven to be the most intractable. It has generated one peril after another: the use of chemical weapons, the rise of ISIL and other extremist groups, the worst refugee crisis since the Second World War and the displacement of 8 million people inside the country.

We need to take urgent measures to protect civilians from widespread violations of international human rights and humanitarian law. We have an obligation to the Syrian people to help ensure accountability for serious crimes. I appeal to the Council to strongly support my Special Envoy's efforts to promote a comprehensive and credible political transition based on the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/523, annex). Iraq, Libya, Syria and Yemen are our common concerns and the resolution of their crises is our shared responsibility.

Next year, Member States will mark the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. With the Strategy now long-established as the accepted framework for action, we must push for more concrete implementation. Those efforts must be balanced and anchored in international human rights law. We must also have a keen sense of the need to avoid unintended consequences. The United Nations is working with many partners to expand capacity-building assistance to Member States, including to stem the flow of foreign terrorist fighters and to address the related ills of illicit drug-trafficking and cybercrime.

It is not enough to counter terrorism; we must also prevent violent extremism, while taking care not to take steps that only breed the resentment and alienation on which violent extremism feeds. During the course of this session of the General Assembly, I will present to the Member States a comprehensive plan of action outlining ways we can work together in this endeavour. The plan of action will recommend ways that Member States can address the drivers of violent extremism at the global, regional, national and local levels. It will also set out how the United Nations system can support Member States through a holistic all-of-United Nations approach encompassing peace and security, sustainable development, human rights and humanitarian action.

The current reviews of peace operations and peacebuilding are also underscoring the importance of addressing root causes. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (General Assembly resolution 70/1), with its focus on justice, inclusive institutions and resilience, also has a strong preventive dimension. A more sustainable world will be a safer world.

Conflicts, governance failures and systematic violations of human rights are affecting not only the Middle East and North Africa, but the world at large. Women and girls are facing systematic brutality. Young people are having their futures taken away from them before they have barely had a chance to dream. We must work together to stop this downward spiral, using all United Nations tools. The people of the Middle East and North Africa deserve our full support in meeting these tests and steering the region towards a path of freedom, safety and dignity for all.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I thank the Secretary-General for his briefing.

I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation.

A year ago, the Russian Federation raised the question of undertaking, under the auspices of the Security Council, a comprehensive analysis of problems related to the suddent outbreak of terrorism and extremism in the Middle East and North Africa. Since then, the situation there has deteriorated further. The growing potential of the crisis has reached the point where it is possible to speak of the destruction of the political map of the region as it stood back then.

Today, we can clearly claim that attempts to address the situation in isolation, without linking it to the overall regional and historical context of individual conflicts, are futile. We addressed the situations in Iraq, Libya, Yemen, Lebanon and Syria in that way in their time, seeking each time to convince one another that if only we resolved that specific problem everything would be fine. In most cases, solutions were often sought in a change of that particular regime or others at any price, with no regard for the consequences and without a comprehensive strategy or even a short-term vision of the following two or three steps.

The euphoria that engulfed many following the Arab Spring changed to horror with the spread of chaos, the escalation of violence, the shadow of religious warfare looming over the region and, of course, the unprecedented terrorist threat. The heinous activities of the Al-Nusra Front, Al-Qaida in Iraq, Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb, the Yemeni branch of Al-Qaida, Al-Shabaab in Somalia, Boko Haram and other groups have faded in the light of the expansion of the so-called Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). Across the territories of Iraq and Syria, ISIL has created an extremist quasi-State on the ground that possesses a vast repressive aparatus, stable sources of income, a well-equipped army and elements of weapons of mass destruction.

ISIL cells are flourishing in Libya, Afghanistan and elsewhere. Its announced plans include the capture of Mecca, Medina and Jerusalem and the spread of its evil activities to Europe, Central and South-East Asia, and Russia. These terrorists carry out mass killings and public executions, and threaten the very existence of various ethno-religious groups, including Christians, Kurds and Alawites. ISIL has a professional propaganda machine active in dozens of languages.

Today, as the merciless expansion of terrorists leads to an uncontrolled wave of population movements to Europe, we recognize the damage that has been done and that there is a need for joint action. We note that, at the recent informal summit of the European Council in Luxembourg and the Prague summit of the Visegrad Group, it was clearly recognized that the migration crisis cannot be resolved until its root causes are addressed — in other words, until a solid bulwark is erected to block ISIL and its desire to subjugate the region with laws dating back to the Middle Ages. We should not be stopping the refugees but the terrorists and conflicts and war they engender.

The Russian assessment of the situation was clearly spelled out in the statement made by President Putin at the general debate of the General Assembly on 28 September (see A/70/PV.13). We do not seek to drive the discussion in the fruitless direction of saying who is right and who is guilty, but unless we learn the lessons to be drawn from the reckless, mistaken adventures undertaken over the past 10 or 12 years, we will not be successful. The main lesson is that any unilateral actions are dangerous. What we need are collective, agreed approaches that are backed by Security Council decisions. We believe that has to begin with a clear and unambiguous determination of priorities. In that connection, in our view, there is a clear understanding that the main threat is terrorist aggression, embodied, as it is, in the actions of ISIL.

We believe that should be followed by consistent, practical steps in three key, interconnected areas. First, it is necessary to combine and coordinate the efforts of those who are able to make a real contribution to the fight against terrorism, namely, the armed forces of Syria and Iraq, the Kurdish militias, the armed ranks of the patriotic Syrian opposition — in short, anyone who opposes ISIL on the ground, as well as outside actors who in one way or another can support counter-terrrorism efforts in the region. It is essential that such coordination be based on decisions of the Security Council, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations. In planning joint action in the fight against ISIL, use could be made of the potential of such a Charter-established body as the Military Staff Committee. This is precisely a case in which the military expertise of the permanent members of the Security Council is needed, in the interest of maximum efficiency in counter-terrorist efforts in the region.

Secondly, there is a need to step up progress on the intra-Syrian dialogue on the basis of the Geneva communiqué of 30 June 2012 (S/2012/522, annex). We support the efforts of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, Mr. Staffan de Mistura, and we are making our contribution to launching a political process that brings together representatives from the entire spectrum of opposition forces and the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Thirdly, there is a need for inclusive and balanced external support for the political process, including the participation of Russia, the United States of America, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Turkey, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, Jordan and Qatar. In that regard, we believe that the European Union has a useful role to play. China's involvement would also boost the chances for success. We believe that such an array of outside sponsors acting in unison would help Syrians reach agreement on the basis of common goals, that is, preventing the creation of an extremist caliphate and strengthening the Syrian State on the basis of national reconciliation and understanding.

While addressing the General Assembly recently (see A/70/PV.13), President Vladimir Putin proposed discussing the possibility of a Security Council resolution on coordinating all forces that want to stand up against the Islamic State and other terrorist groups. Today we will present to the members of the Council a draft resolution based on previously adopted Council resolutions, with the aim of aligning joint counter-terrorism efforts on the basis of the norms of international law. We expect a comprehensive discussion of this topic in the coming month.

We are mindful of the growth of the threat posed by ISIL, and there is a need now to forge practical cooperation on the activities of all forces working to counter terrorism. On 30 September, following a request of the Syrian leadership, the President of Russia asked for and received the consent of the Federation Council to use the armed forces of the Russian Federation in the Syrian Arab Republic. I am referring here exclusively to the use of the Russian air force to carry out strikes against ISIL positions in Syria. We have informed the authorities of the United States and other members of the coalition established by it. We are prepared to set up open channels of communication to ensure the most effective fight against terrorist groups.

The most important task is to counter the financing of terrorism. The ingenuity of terrorists in an effort to diversify their sources of income cannot but cause concern. Among their main sources are the illicit trade in oil and other mineral resources and illegal trafficking in drugs, weapons and cultural artefacts, as well as "donations" from sympathizers. In that connection, we call for more stringent implementation of the provisions of resolution 2199 (2015) with regard to drawing up a sanctions list of physical and legal entities that are trading with the Islamic State. There is also a need to improve the effectiveness of the Group of Experts of the Al-Qaida Sanctions Committee, systematically and while taking advantage of the potential of the Financial Action Task Force on Money Laundering and related regional structures. We also propose making States accountable for their implementation of resolution 2199 (2015) in a regular and systematic maner.

We believe that it is necessary to include the Islamic State as a separate entity on the Security Council's counter-terrorism sanctions list. Any delay in addressing this clearly pressing issue would, of course, be counterproductive in terms of the effectiveness of United Nations counter-terrorism efforts.

We call for more aggressively countering the threats posed by foreign terrorist fighters. We need urgently to establish a single database on such fighters, develop additional mechanisms for sharing information on their movements and put in place simplified procedures for their extradition. Preventive efforts are of particular importance. First and foremost, we need to counter incitement to terrorism in line with resolution 1624 (2005), adopted 10 years ago. Since that time, the urgency of countering terrorist ideology has increased substantially. Russia's multi-ethnic and multireligious character gives us unique experience when it comes to peaceful coexistence among different ethnic groups and religious communities. We are ready to share our experience and to learn from our partners.

Preventing terrorism, including in partnership with civil-society organizations, also entails addressing violent extremism. We believe it fundamentally important that the initiatives now being proposed in this area be firmly based on international law, including respect for sovereignty and equality of States and non-interference in internal affairs. One cannot bandy about slogans to promote the fight against extremism in specific countries over the heads of legitimate Governments. Such attempts have already happened and have not led to anything good, as everyone here is aware.

Combating the terrorist threat must go hand in hand with heightened efforts to resolve various conflict situations in the region, whether in Syria, Libya or Yemen. First and foremost, however, this applies to the longstanding stalemate in the Palestinian-Israeli question, which is fuelling extremist feelings on the Arab street. The Quartet of international mediators, together with Arab States and with the support of other United Nations Members, must acknowledge their responsibility for re-establishing direct talks between Israel and Palestine, on the basis of the concept of two States. Progress on that track would make a major contribution to ensuring stability and security for the peoples of the region.

We look forward to a frank discussion during the course of today's meetings, as well as in upcoming meetings. It is important that we listen to one another as we explain our positions, as well as to find ways to cooperate on the basis of the Charter of the United Nations in order to put an end to the terrorist threats and ensure security in the Middle East and North Africa.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I shall now give the floor to the other members of the Council.

I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Wang Yi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China.

Mr. Wang Yi (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China supports and greatly appreciates Russia's initiative to convene this open debate of the Security Council at the ministerial level. Resolving the conflicts in the Middle East and eliminating the threat posed by terrorism are essential to world peace and part of the responsibilities of the Security Council.

The situation in the Middle East region is serious and disturbing, with differences among nations, religious sects and ethnic groups aggravating the situation. Wars and conflicts, humanitarian disasters and terrorist threats are interlinked. The image of the drowned 3-year-old Syrian boy is an affront to human morality and strikes at the conscience of the international community.

We are gathered today in the Chamber of the Security Council not to express lament and engage in empty rhetoric, but to seriously reflect on the root causes of the turmoil in the Middle East, make an accurate and objective assessment of the situation in the region, seek a feasible and effective solution and strive to build a framework for peace that can be acceptable to all parties. More important, we are here to seize opportunities and take action to break the vicious circle of incessant turbulence in the Middle East, comply with the mandate entrusted to the Security Council by the Charter of the United Nations and meet the expectations of the international community and, in particular, of the people of the Middle East.

China hopes that the international community and the people of the Middle East will jointly build a region of peace, tolerance and prosperity. First and foremost, the peoples of the Middle East need a region of peace. Stability is a blessing, while turmoil brings with it peril. Peace is the most precious. The 70-year history of the United Nations has witnessed continuous gun smoke in the Middle East and the displacement of innocent civilians.

The history of the Middle East has taught us, time and again, that violence will not lead to the ultimate solution of problems and that hatred will only extinguish hopes. Only by respecting one another can people live together peacefully. Only by adhering to dialogue can problems be resolved, and only by promoting friendship can a better future be created. That is what the international community hopes to see and what China's diplomacy aims to achieve.

People need a Middle East characterized by tolerance. The Middle East — once a cradle of civilization — boasts a glorious history with major contributions to human progress. Its flourishing civilization and cultural confidence have made that region an important platform for exchanges and the integration of Eastern and Western civilizations. In the twenty-first century, the coexistence of civilizations requires the spirit of harmony without imposed uniformity, more than ever before, and the progress of society calls for inclusiveness and broad-mindedness. The various religions should tolerate and learn from one another, and the various ethnicities should live in harmony.

People need a Middle East of self-advancement. The Middle East is the home of all the peoples in that region. Therefore, its future and destiny should be determined by those same countries, through consultation. Countries outside of the region may provide help but should avoid interfering in the internal affairs of other countries and — even more importantly — avoid imposing a specific model on them. The regional order should be shaped by the countries in the Middle East, based on the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, in the light of the circumstances on the ground, and in accordance with the needs of the people there.

The Syrian crisis has been lingering for nearly five years. The international community should not stand idly by, nor should it intervene arbitrarily. First, we need to step up humanitarian assistance. In particular, the growing tension caused by the migrant situation needs to be addressed so as to avoid additional tragedies. We welcome greater efforts on the part of European Union member States to that end. Syria's neighbouring countries — which have received over 4 million Syrian refugees over the past several years — face even greater and more immediate pressure. It is both unfair and unrealistic to ignore their efforts and difficulties.

Political settlement is the only way out of the Syrian crisis. To achieve that goal, parties need to find a middle way that draws on workable international and regional practices, satisfies Syria's national conditions and accommodates the interests of all parties. The resurgence of violent terrorist forces and the spread of the migrant crisis have further driven home to all parties the necessity and urgency of seeking a political settlement to the Syrian crisis.

China calls on all parties to seize the opportunity — arising from a growing desire for a political settlement — to convene a third Geneva Conference on Syria and push for restarting an inclusive political transition process that does not set preconditions or predetermined results, and involves all parties to the conflict. Let the Syrian people decide for themselves the future of their country, with the help of the international community and the support of the Security Council.

In order to achieve that goal, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and Special Envoy de Mistura are carrying out active mediation efforts. China, in that regard, hopes that all parties will unite behind the United Nations endeavour, create conditions, build consensus and foster an enabling environment for a mediated solution to succeed.

China is deeply concerned about the recent conflict between Israel and Palestine involving the Al-Aqsa mosque compound. Violence never brings true security; it will only entrench hatred. China firmly supports the timely restoration of the Palestinian people's lawful rights and the realization of peaceful coexistence between the two States of Palestine and Israel. The international community should work together to facilitate restarting talks between Palestine and Israel on a broad-based platform, with the direct participation of all parties concerned. Only talks can bring hope for peace and a better future.

Terrorism is a scourge affecting all humankind. The evolving situation in the Middle East has repeatedly shown that terrorist activities are all the same in nature, and that, in order to fight them, we must not adopt double standards. Combatting violent terrorism in all of its manifestations should be the shared responsibility and priority of countries in the region and the international community. China calls for broad-based and comprehensive international counter-terrorism cooperation within the United Nations framework. International counter-terrorism cooperation should include the following priorities: combatting cyber-terrorism, preventing the rise of violent extremist ideologies, blocking the flow of terrorists and terrorist funding, strengthening the exchange of intelligence and giving full play to the role of Security Council.

China believes in a comprehensive response to terrorism that addresses both the symptoms and the root causes. Regional instability and development gaps breed terrorism, while ethnic disunity and religious conflict allow radical ideologies to resurface. In order to fundamentally resolve issues that breed and help spread terrorism, we must properly address regional disputes, restore regional stability, enhance the governance capabilities of the various countries, accelerate economic development and improve people's lives in tangible ways.

China hopes that this Security Council meeting will be a new starting point for renewed efforts on the part of the international community and open new prospects for peace and security in the Middle East.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Nasser Judeh, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign and Expatriates Affairs of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.

Mr. Judeh (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow us, Mr. President, to express our profound gratitude for your initiative in convening this important meeting on the settlements of disputes in North Africa and the Middle East and on facing terrorist threats in the region.

By virtue of our geographic location, we — in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan — are the most implicated in the current struggles in the region; and we are the most directly affected by the political, economic, security and humanitarian problems. Our vision of the root causes and the factors of instability in the region come out of a realistic view of our direct and vital interests in the settlement of disputes and the restoration of peace and stability to the region. The root causes of conflict in the region — which have been exacerbated since what has previously been referred to as the Arab Spring — have been fed by deprivation. By deprivation, I mean both political and social deprivation, which began at different phases over the last several years. The situation has worsened to varying degrees in the various countries of the region. The common denominator among the countries that have experienced such struggles is the cumulative effects of that deprivation — be it political, social or economic — and the lack of political prospects to correct the situation in those areas. Efforts to steer away from political discrimination and marginalization have also been inadequate. Those shortcomings have led to approaches that are guided by sectarian or tribal tensions — at the expense of national unity and peace. That has created fertile ground for terrorist organizations to expand their operations.

Today, we are also witnessing the occupation of Jerusalem — in particular, the occupation of the Al-Aqsa mosque compound — Haram al-Sharif. The ongoing Israeli violations threaten peace between religions. We call on Israel to stop these violations immediately and to respect the sanctity of holy places, in accordance with the fact that his Majesty King Abdullah is the Custodian of the holy Muslim and Christian places in Jordan, in order to avert the repercussions of such a crisis on the whole world. There is no doubt that the root cause of the conflict is the fact that the people of Palestine have for decades been deprived of their historical rights and prevented from establishing an independent State on their national territory. That was the beginning of the instability in the region, which over the years has been translated into various forms of extremism both inside and outside the region.

The only solution, therefore, is the two-State one: the establishment of an independent Palestinian State within the borders of 4 June 1967. This is indeed of major interest to Jordan, because Jordan is directly involved in all serious negotiations on issues pertaining to the final solution in this respect.

The basis for restoring stability and solving the existing problems requires a comprehensive political process that deals with the root cause of the conflicts in the region: the absence of a political solution to the Syrian conflict, which is about to enter its sixth year — one that leads to a political transition, satisfies the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people and guarantees their unity and security. That absence serves only to fuel extremism and terrorism and to aggravate the situation. In addition, the absence of an inclusive and comprehensive political process in Iraq and sectarian marginalization has also given the Islamic State in Iraq and Sham (ISIS)/Daesh a chance to develop. Defeating that terrorist regime will require a political reconciliation process and the strengthening of national unity among all Iraqi factions.

In Libya, despite international efforts to achieve a political solution among the Libyan parties and make the transition to a modern State, which requires the support of international legitimacy, there has been an expansion of terrorist activities, notably those of ISIS, among others.

Regarding Yemen, we have to recognize that there is no alternative to a political solution and that all political parties should go back to the political process as represented by the Gulf Cooperation Council initiative and the results of the National Dialogue Conference, in addition to accepting constitutional legitimacy as represented by his Excellency Abdrabuh Mansour Hadi Mansour. Had it not been for the fact that some parties rejected this process, there would have been no reason for military action to strengthen and stabilize the legitimacy of the Government.

The conflicts that are raging in many countries have taken on sectarian aspects and threaten to ignite a Sunni-Shiite conflagration that would jeopardize the security and stability of the region. The fact that these conflicts have taken on a sectarian aspect has strengthened, in one way or another, the approaches taken and the views espoused by certain terrorist organizations. Jordan has repeatedly emphasized that it completely rejects the idea that this is a Sunni-Shiite sectarian conflict or any form of religious conflict. A confrontation of this nature must be dealt with in a completely political context.

The humanitarian dimension of the ongoing conflicts is increasingly problematic. Today we see Syrian refugees flowing into neighbouring States and beyond. The humanitarian consequences resulting from the absence of political solutions cannot be contained. There can be no humanitarian solution to the Syrian problem. What we need is a political solution that will put an end to this human suffering. Jordan, my country, today is hosting approximately 1.4 million Syrian citizens, in addition to a large number of refugees from other countries, despite our limited capabilities. My country has, however, almost exhausted its ability to host those refugees in the absence of the international support required to share the burden.

Today we are seeing heart-rending photographs of those people, of an ancient civilization and culture, as they seek refuge outside their country. The international community as a whole must assume its responsibilities, as countries cannot alone assume it in its stead. It is important to emphasize that we should comply with and fully implement Security Council resolutions relating to the fight against terrorism. We in Jordan are at the forefront of the international efforts to combat terrorism, at the military, security and ideological levels. His Majesty King Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein has emphasized that this war is our war. It is a war within Islam, against the Khawarij, who distort the image of our religion, which is a religion of tolerance and one that preaches acceptance of others, peace and dialogue.

In his address to the General Assembly the day before yesterday (see A/70/PV.13), His Majesty stressed that it is certain that the most important front in this war is the intellectual one. We must seek, as a human society, to win over hearts and minds; we should unite all of our efforts to wage this war. It is vital that we comply with and fully implement the relevant resolutions of the Security Council regarding the fight against terrorism, including resolution 2170 (2014), on the threat posed by the Al-Nusra Front and Daesh, and resolution 2178 (2014), on facing the threat of foreign terrorist fighters, who are joining terrorist organizations in the region from more than 100 countries. This phenomenon has dire consequences for both countries of origin and countries of destination, in addition to the dangers it poses to neighbouring countries, including the perpetration of terrorist attacks in those States, which places a heavy security burden on them.

The success of efforts to combat terrorism and extremism will require an inclusive political approach dealing with the root causes of the crisis: deprivation, marginalization and exclusion, which were primarily responsible for weakening the State and created a vacuum that was then exploited by terrorist groups. Revitalizing political processes aimed at solving these problems would support the military and security approaches, both within and outside the region, and address the issue of the financing of foreign terrorist fighters by depriving their purposes and motives of any legitimacy.

We in the Security Council, the organ entrusted with the maintenance of international peace and security, must rise to the challenge and meet the expectations of peoples all over the world. We must assume our responsibilities in this context.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Laurent Fabius, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Development of the French Republic.

Mr. Fabius (France) (*spoke in French*): I will focus my statement on the fight against terrorism in Iraq and Syria.

Confronted with the Syrian crisis and the limitless barbarism of Daesh, the Security Council has, unfortunately, mostly been the "Impotence Council". What the victims of this tragedy and international public opinion are demanding of us can be expressed in two words: act fast. That is also France's position, and I would add, if possible, act in unison.

France is an independent Power. Around the world, we seek peace and security. In Iraq and Syria, that requirement has determined and will determine our choices. In Iraq, in August 2014, when Daesh seized Mosul, an international coalition was formed. From day one, France committed itself to it. Our military action, relayed on the ground by the Iraqi security forces and the peshmerga, was accompanied by a political process of national reconciliation. It took no less than a year after the start of our involvement before Daesh began to pull back. It remains a strong threat, and all of us here now know that defeating terrorism will require a long-term effort.

In Syria, the situation is even more complex. Indeed, there the terrorist group Daesh has flourished in reality with the complicity of Mr. Bashar Al-Assad's regime. Its grip on Syrian territory has expanded in recent months, with the city of Raqqa as its centre. The flow of foreign fighters has increased, raising the terrorist risk far beyond the Levant region. The regime's scorched earth policy has alienated a large majority of the population. A military response from the coalition was organized. We think that it should be strengthened. But by itself it cannot be a sufficient response, since the solution — and I think we all are in agreement on this point at least — must be a political solution.

Today, some are proposing that we join our forces to form in Syria a grand coalition against Daesh. Russia has just presented the principles for a draft Security Council resolution. What is France's position? It is based on a few principles that I will now set forth.

First, we must strike Daesh wherever we can. As far as France is concerned, that is what we are doing. In Iraq, we have been operating for more than a year in the framework of the coalition and at the request of the Iraqi Government. In Syria, the coalition's air forces have been engaged for several months, and last Sunday, by decision of the President of the Republic, French fighter planes took action against a training camp where attacks were being prepared specifically against our country.

I say to all partners who wish to join our efforts: they are welcome, subject to three conditions.

The first is that there can be no ambiguity about whom we are fighting. The ones that we must fight are the terrorists affiliated with Daesh and other radical groups that want to impose their barbaric laws. But that obviously does not include the civilian population and the moderate opposition forces, which for years have courageously defended their vision — which is also ours — of a united Syria that is democratic and respectful of all communities, in contrast to the other form of terror, namely, the bloody repression on the part of the regime. That is the first condition — the enemy is Daesh and not the civilian population or the moderate opposition.

The second condition is that an end be brought, at the same time, to other forms of violence against civilians, which is what is actually fuelling extremism and the dramatic flow of refugees. It is said that 80 per cent of the 250,000 dead from the Syrian crisis and that

80 per cent of the millions of refugees driven out of the country in the last three years were the result of the indiscriminate shelling on the part of the regime, which must be stopped. The Security Council must, therefore, once and for all, prohibit the use in Syria of barrel bombs and chlorine bombs.

The third condition is that it be recognized that the problem must be addressed at the root: the fight against Daesh is connected to a political transition that could give new hope to the Syrian people. The fate of that people cannot be limited to alternative horrors — a criminal regime, on the one hand, or barbaric terrorism, on the other hand. What we need to seek is set forth in black and white in the Geneva communiqué of June 2012: a Government with full executive powers that brings together elements of the regime — yes, elements of the regime — and elements of the opposition that reject terrorism.

The time has come to implement such an exit transition and reassure the Syrian people that their future will not be in the hands of an executioner. We are familiar with the essential objectives, parameters and players for such a transition. We now need to implement the process. In our view, it involves a broad negotiation, under the auspices of the United Nations Special Envoy for Syria and under the supervision of a contact group whose core, in our view, could be extended beyond the Permanent Five to include key regional partners.

I would add that in order to make those commitments credible, we must consider the mechanisms that can effectively, beyond words, protect the civil population. In Syria, there are entire areas that are now under the fire of indiscriminate bombing that is not justified by the struggle against terrorism. Thousands of Syrians have had to flee their cities and villages. That must stop. Several of our partners have put forward concrete proposals for creating — the nomenclature varies — security zones, overflight prohibition zones — in which the safety of the civilian population would be ensured. We need to study those proposals carefully and quickly, in order, if possible, to implement them wherever they would be helpful to peace.

In the fight against Daesh, there is no magic formula that could exempt us from the long effort needed to combat terrorism. But there are — and they should be avoided — false solutions that would only prolong the crisis. A coalition whose very foundation would, in fact, prohibit any rallying of Syrians against terrorists would fuel the Daesh propaganda and in the end strengthen its power of attraction. It would be a moral and political error for which the Syrian people, the entire Middle East, Europe and the world would have to pay for decades.

France is therefore ready to act with its traditional partners — and with Russia and others — on the basis of the three principles I have just set forth, as long as the actions taken respect the three conditions: an effective military engagement against Daesh and other terrorist groups, and not against the Syrian resistants or the civilian population; stopping the barrel bombing and chlorine bombing of the civilian population; and a broad negotiation aimed at a political transition that does not lead to keeping the executioner of Syria in power, but which makes it possible, finally, to truly bring the Syrian people together. Those are the three preconditions for the effectiveness of our actions in Syria.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Moussa Faki Mahamat, Minister for Foreign Affairs and African Integration of the Republic of Chad.

Mr. Mahamat (Chad) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank the Russian Federation for having organized this very important meeting on the settlement of conflicts in the Middle East and North Africa and countering the terrorist threat in the region. I would also like to thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his briefing.

The seventieth anniversary of the United Nations affords us an opportunity together to ponder not only the persistence of armed conflicts but also to reflect on a new type of threat, that of terrorism, which is spreading at a mind-boggling pace and threatening peace and security throughout the world. This meeting comes at just the right time. I hope that it will enable us to carry out a comprehensive, in-depth analysis of all the scourges afflicting the Middle East and North Africa and to contemplate collective actions based on the Charter of the United Nations and international law.

At the outset, we need to ask ourselves about the root causes of terrorism today and its manifestations — Daesh, Al-Qaida, Jabhat Al-Nusra, Ansar Al-Sharia and so forth — before we turn to coming up with solutions. In the part of the world we are discussing, extreme socioeconomic crises and a lack of political reform that meets people's aspirations for greater democracy and freedom are sources of significant frustration. Corruption, oppression, discriminatory practices and marginalization of ethnic and religious minorities have all further exacerbated the situation. That explosive situation has been compounded by external interference, as the chaos that has taken hold of certain countries, such as Syria and Libya, serves to bear out.

If we take the case of Libya, for example, we should recall that during the very first hours of the crisis the African Union sought a negotiated solution. A mediation process was on the verge of achieving success. Unfortunately, it was ignored — and even undermined. No chance was given for a peaceful settlement to the crisis. The consequence was the destabilization of a country and an entire region which today has become the favoured arena of terrorists of all stripes. The chaos that followed continues to impact most of the African continent as well as Europe, notably with the phenomenon of migration. This chaos threatens all the countries of the Sahel region, including those neighbouring my country, Chad, as a result of the illicit flow of weapons and the actions of terrorist groups active in Libya. Among the factors that further exacerbate the conflict in the Middle East and North Africa are the illicit transfer of weapons to non-State actors, the shortcomings of conflict-prevention mechanisms and the poor coordination between the United Nations and regional organizations. We must be frank that the situation is compounded by the slow response of the international community, especially that of the Council.

Allow me to touch on a few possible avenues to find solutions to confront terrorism and tackle the crises that have resulted in the region recently.

First, there is a need to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The conflict, which is as old as the United Nations and has persisted for decades without any prospects for peace, is a major source of the problems in the region. With regard to the Palestinian issue, we are of the firm belief that there is no alternative to a two-State solution, one that can put an end to the Israeli occupation and create an independent, sovereign and viable Palestinian State living side by side with Israel in peace and security. In that regard, the Security Council must clearly determine responsibilities and exert the necessary pressure on the parties to ensure that the two-State solution becomes a reality. The international community must not simply accept the situation of what Palestinians experience on a daily basis — continued settlements, the expropriation of land, the destruction of homes, forced displacement, repeated incursions and the ongoing desecration of the Al-Aqsa Mosque.

Secondly, we believe that only a political solution via a direct dialogue among the parties to the conflict that addresses the underlying causes of the Syrian crisis stands a chance of putting an end to the human tragedy and to preserving the unity of that country. Against that backdrop, we think it is high time for the Security Council to fully play its role to lend renewed momentum to the search for a political solution to the crisis, which would enable us to implement the 2012 Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex).

The flow of Syrian refugees into Europe across the sea — a journey fraught with peril to their lives — reflects the gravity of the Syrian crisis. Above and beyond the emotions aroused by the recent shocking images, this unprecedented migration, with its toll in desperation and suffering, should move our conscience to analyse the situation in a realistic way and to take the necessary steps to find a political solution to the conflict.

Thirdly, with regard to Libya, Chad reiterates the need for an urgent political solution that safeguards the territorial integrity and unity of the country and the cohesiveness of its people, including the establishment of a Government of national unity that is able to put an end to the hostilities. A national reconciliation agreement remains necessary and pressing to restore order and security to avoid the country's collapse. We continue to believe that there can be no military solution to the Libyan conflict and that all the parties must act responsibly and put an end to their use of violence. The Security Council must send a strong message to those who wish to undermine the political process by promoting a military solution as the negotiations are under way. We urge the international community to come together with the countries of the region and regional organizations, in particular the African Union and the League of Arab States, to enable them to contribute effectively to the peace process.

Fourthly, as far as the fight against terrorist acts is concerned, we need to recall that the sanctions list to date includes 20 Al-Qaida-associated entities in North Africa and the Middle East. That is alarming. Despite the numerous Security Council resolutions and the collective efforts against terrorist groups, unfortunately, we are forced to conclude that the terrorist threat continues to increase and poses an existentialist threat to some States. Countries need to cooperate at a subregional, regional and national level by exchanging information and by improving their mechanisms for the extradition of terrorists.

In conclusion, we want to underscore that the Security Council, which bears the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, must play a leading role in the prevention and management of conflicts in the Middle East, North Africa and elsewhere. Regional organizations such as the African Union and the League of Arab States must be fully involved in the prevention and peaceful settlement of conflicts by setting up and strengthening a strategic partnership between the United Nations and regional organizations. The growing interdependence throughout the world and the links among regional and local conflicts requires joint coordinated action more than ever.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. José Manuel García Margallo, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of the Kingdom of Spain.

Mr. García Margallo (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to begin by highlighting the timeliness and relevance of convening this meeting at a particularly complex moment. I would also like to underscore that, in combating the phenomenon of terrorism, it is crucial that there be leadership, perseverance, determination and, above all, unity. Without unity, they will defeat us.

Spain has a long and painful experience in combatting domestic and foreign terror. With regard to combatting domestic, separatist terrorism, it is worth recalling that 55 years ago the first victim — a 22-month-old baby girl — died as a result of a bomb explosion in a railway station. Since then, Spain has suffered more than 800 deaths at the hands of the terrorists of Euskadi Ta Askatasuna. With respect to foreign terror, we have suffered many attacks. Particularly memorable was the Madrid attack of 11 March 2004, in which 190 people, the majority of whom were people of humble origins going to work on local trains, were killed.

There are five lessons that we can learn from this experience and that can be useful to the international community. First, as I said yesterday, we do not negotiate with terrorists; we defeat them. Secondly, we defeat them with the law — only with the law, but with the full force of the law. Thirdly, international cooperation is absolutely necessary in terms of intelligence, the coordination of security forces and the speediest possible extradition of murderers. Fourthly, civil society must be involved. Once again, the Spanish experience shows that, between 1960 and 1997, after the killings in the Basque country, the victims had to be buried in silence and in the dark, because often they were said to be responsible for their own misfortune. When civil society reacted, things began to change. Lastly, it is necessary to reveal, show and uncover the real face of these murderers. They are not soldiers; they are — I repeat — criminals. They are not believers; they are blasphemous because religion is always the language of peace.

Before drawing lessons that could be useful to the international community, I shall make a few comments on the current situation. As has been said, more than five years of war in Syria have resulted in 250,000 deaths, 12.5 million people who need urgent humanitarian assistance, 8 million internally displaced persons and 4 million refugees outside the country in Jordan, Turkey and Lebanon, which is putting those countries in a extraordinarily difficult situation. I recall the fact that Lebanon, whose per capita income is one fifth of that of the European Union, has a refugee population equal to 25 per cent of its total population. I do not need to describe Jordan's situation; anyone who has been to Zaatari knows what is happening there.

However, the worse part of the situation in Syria is that the fight between the two forces has created a vacuum that Daesh and other forces associated with Al-Qaida have exploited in order to try to establish a caliphate that would drag us back into the darkest periods of the Middle Ages, using the most modern techniques to recruit, finance and broadcast its grisly deeds. The second phenomenon that we have experienced recently is the massive flow of refugees who have to flee their land in search of freedom. This calls into question the very foundation of the immigration and asylum policy of the European Union. It demonstrates that we cannot wait much longer. We must act and act now.

In Libya, we also find a very complicated situation. Simply put, there has been a lengthy war between the Tripoli and Tobruk factions that has also been exploited by Daesh to plant its black flags on the coast of Libya and has unleashed a flow of illegal migration that is also calling into question the immigration policy of the European Union.

In Iraq, things are a little better because, as we see it, there is a legitimate Government which, at our request, has allowed us to send more than 300 Spanish troops to train Iraqi forces. In Spain's opinion, the Iraqi Government should pursue its inclusive efforts so that the Sunnis, the former soldiers of Saddam Hussein and the Kurdish peshmerga will join together with the regular army in a common effort against a common enemy. If I can borrow from the title of a famous pamphlet, what is to be done done? The first issue is that without the cooperation and international coordination on the part of everyone — members and non-members of the coalition — this will not work.

Secondly, it is absolutely necessary to coordinate the struggle against foreign fighters. To that end, we recently convened, on 27 and 28 July in Madrid, a special meeting of the Counter-Terrorism Committee, which approved a ministerial statement, which I will not read out because it is available to the members of the Security Council. Given its geographical situation and historical tradition, Spain is closely involved with the countries of the Mediterranean and the Near East. We have hosted many meetings with the moderate Syrian opposition in Cordoba. We have facilitated international meetings on Libya involving the most important countries of the world. In Barcelona, we brought the together 28 countries of the European Union plus eight from the southern shore of the Mediterranean. And we have launched institutional reinforcement programmes to strengthen democratic institutions, in particular the Masar programme — which means "way" in Arabic — in North Africa and the Supporting the Inclusive Public Policies in Sub-Saharan Africa Programme, the Apia Programme, in sub-Saharan Africa.

The second lesson that we can draw from the Spanish experience, which is applicable to the situations we are experiencing, is that it is necessary to respect the rule of law and to combat impunity. Just yesterday, we met with experts and representatives of various countries and non-governmental organizations in order to submit a draft project for the establishment of an international criminal court against terrorism. This would be an international legal instrument designed exclusively to combat crimes of terrorism with the instruments of international law. The court would be a complement to the intervention of the International Criminal Court and would fill the gaps that have been observed, and would come into effect only when a State is not in a position to try, prosecute and punish. Therefore, it would be a subsidiary to national courts.

I have spoken of the Spanish experience and of the need to involve civil society in combatting terror. Intercultural and interreligious dialogue represents, in the view of Spain, a fundamental tool. We therefore participate with Turkey and many other countries in the Alliance of Civilizations. We participate with Saudi Arabia and Austria in the King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue, and we have organized various initiatives to support this dialogue and establish a tolerant and peaceful image of Islam that is a doctrine of love.

We also participated in the debate organized by the French presidency on the defence of religious minorities (see S/PV.7419), where we presented, as a specific initiative that I will reiterate, the establishment of the post of special representative of the Secretary-General to combat violent extremism, who would coordinate the myriad initiatives that are often not coordinated yet have the same objective, but have little resources because they lack coordination. In Barcelona on 23 July, I repeated this same invitation at a meeting attended by religious leaders, brought together by the Alliance of Civilizations and the Union for the Mediterranean. Speaking before the Alliance, I said that the Union for the Mediterranean brought together 43 countries of the north and south banks of the Mediterranean and was therefore a very important forum for analysing these issues.

I would also like to announce that the Club de Madrid will meet on 27 and 28 October and will bring together 100 former Heads of State and Government from around the world to analyse the terrorist phenomenon and efforts to combat terror.

I have underscored the fact that it is important to include public opinion in our efforts and to show it the real face of the victims. Therefore, we will convene in the Security Council, under the presidency that we will assume tomorrow, an Arria-formula meeting for victims of terrorist violence throughout the world who will testify about their suffering and pain and what they expect from us. Now, in this context of involving civil society in combating terror, we assign particular importance to the role of women. Therefore, on 13 October the President of the Government of Spain, Mariano Rajoy, will preside over a Security Council meeting, a high-level debate on women and peace and security, pursuant to resolution 1325 (2000).

I conclude with a reference to young people. No young person is born a terrorist. They become terrorists. Education is thus a vital element. I am not going to give a lecture on education, but let me just narrate a short story.

In the Syrian conflict we are seeing almost 500,000 children who are not going to school. That creates a suitable breeding ground for radicalization and the fuelling of terrorism. The Security Council and the United Nations have said that we need to include a debate on that theme in our discussions. Poverty, unemployment and living conditions are the root causes of terrorism. I am not going to give a lecture on poverty either, but simply say that in a recent visit to Gaza I had the opportunity to observe that 1.7 million people live in Gaza who are without jobs, without a future, without any hope. The majority are under 25 years old, and 90 per cent of those people have no jobs, no activities and, I insist, no future.

I refer to the importance of social networks and the Internet. It has been said that the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham is an anachronistic movement in terms of its objectives and purposes but extraordinarily post-modern in the way it uses social networks. It is up to us all to make an effort.

I would like to close by saying that we welcome the efforts of all countries, whether they are part of the coalition led by the United States of America or not, to fight together. If we have a common enemy, then let us have a common front, and let us postpone any other objective, however legitimate it might be, for the only goal that should unite us: the defeat as soon as possible terror in the countries where it is existing.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Linas Linkevičius, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania.

Mr. Linkevičius (Lithuania): The political and security situation in the Middle East has rarely been more dramatic. No other modern conflict has produced such massive destruction. Over 12 million displaced and refugees, hundreds of thousands of killed and wounded, two million children deprived of education, and a country in ruin — such is the cost of this conflict, now well into its fifth year.

Syria's neighbours Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon are bearing the brunt of refugee flows. The capacity of Jordan and Lebanon in particular to cope with the flows of refugees is stretched to the limit, threatening a breakdown of vital services and infrastructure. The Syrian Government's war against its own population has enabled the spread of violent extremism and terrorism in the country, which is further fuelled by the influx of foreign terrorist fighters. The fighting in Yemen and the fragility of the situations in Iraq, Libya and elsewhere in the region risk expanding the zone of terror even further, contributing to even greater displacement.

Syrians make up some 70 per cent of those trying to cross the Mediterranean. While it is first and foremost a glaring failure of the Syrian Government to protect its population, it is also the Security Council's failure. The Council should have acted early and forcefully on the crisis in Syria. Instead, it remained paralysed by a succession of vetoes aimed at protecting the perpetrators, not the civilian victims. Those who cast those vetoes share with the Syrian regime the heavy responsibility for the deaths, destruction and displacement of the Syrian people.

My delegation is firmly convinced that the use of the veto has no place in cases of massive abuses of human rights, crimes against humanity, war crimes and genocide. We therefore welcome France's initiative on veto restraint. Lithuania also joined Liechtenstein's initiative on the code of conduct regarding Security Council action against genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes.

One cannot pretend to defend the law by practicing lawlessness. One cannot fight terrorism by attacking and abusing the civilian population. Extending Al-Assad's stay in power, including by foreign military buildup in Syria, is not a viable solution and can only deepen the conflict. The Syrian Government and those supporting it must stop bombing its Syrian people and engage fully on the implementation of the Geneva Communiqué of June 2012. Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura has our full support as he seeks to put the political process back on track.

While some criticism for Europe's response to the refugee crisis is in order, the European Union is doing a lot to respond to the crisis in a comprehensive manner, working with countries of origin, transit countries and countries of destination. As a follow-up to the European

Agenda on Migration adopted earlier this year, the European Commission produced a comprehensive package of proposals to help address the refugee crisis, including by tackling the root causes that make people seek refuge.

We hope the Security Council will support European actions aimed at tackling the smugglers in the Mediterranean, who profit unscrupulously and cynically from human suffering while putting more and more human lives at risk. Inaction is not an option. The migrant-smuggling industry expands and develops, pouring money into the hands of criminal gangs and, eventually, the hands of terrorists.

Lithuania has pledged its share in receiving the refugees. Necessary preparations are being made as the first families from Syria and Iraq are being resettled. At the same time we are providing assistance to and welcoming refugees from Ukraine's regions occupied by Russia's proxies. Let us not forget that Russia's aggression against Ukraine and the illegal annexation of Crimea caused massive displacement and left five million people dependent on humanitarian assistance. The recent criminal decision by Russian-backed illegal militants in eastern Ukraine to expel United Nations and other humanitarian agencies will increase the suffering of the local population even further as the cold season approaches.

The Council has created an impressive normative base for combatting terrorism, including resolutions 1373 (2001) and 1624 (2005), whose tenth anniversary we marked earlier this September. The Council has also responded to the emergence of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and the phenomenon of foreign terrorist fighters by reinforcing existing counterterrorism framework with resolutions 2170 (2014), 2178 (2014) and 2199 (2015) and a comprehensive presidential statement (S/PRST/2015/11) adopted under the Lithuanian presidency in May. We must now ensure that no gaps remain between the normative base and its implementation.

Modern-day terrorists like ISIL can be brutal and barbaric, but they are also sophisticated in their use of modern communications technologies for propaganda and recruitment. To fight them effectively, we must constantly adjust and adapt our responses and engage the whole range of actors: Governments, the private sector, academia, community and religious leaders, youth, and women, as well as survivors of terrorist attacks. I want to stress in particular the role women. They can serve in the first line of defence against radicalization and violent extremism, starting from their families and local communities all the way to national and international leadership.

Just as they make people flee and seek salvation elsewhere, protracted conflicts, the breakdown of governance and the rule of law, oppressive regimes and rampant corruption, exclusion and abuse of minorities, extreme inequalities and systematic gross violations of human rights all play into the hands of extremism and terrorism. To tackle the threat of terrorism, we must cut off its life support by addressing those very underlying causes, as well as the injustices and lingering grievances that make people vulnerable to incitement and recruitment.

We must also focus on accountability for terrorist crimes. We can no longer tolerate continued impunity for terrorist acts, terrorism financing, recruitment and incitement. Enhancing national and international capacities needed to go after terrorists and their sponsors, and better use of existing justice mechanisms, including the International Criminal Court, must be part and parcel of anti-terrorism strategies and our common commitment.

Accountability is a key to deterrence. It is also the key to doing justice to the victims of terrorism. Those victims should never be forgotten. They must inspire us to redouble our efforts in stemming this most dangerous phenomenon, which threatens humanity and all the very best that we as humans beings stand for.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to Her Excellency Mrs. Delcy Rodríguez Gómez, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

Mrs. Rodríguez Gómez (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of President Nicolás Maduro Moros of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this important meeting on this subject.

Venezuela has historically condemned terrorism in all its forms and wherever it originates. As we reconsider the Middle East and what is happening there, there is even more reason to welcome the convening of today's meeting. The situation there is deeply worrying. Seventy years after the birth of the United Nations, I am ashamed to say, we are still talking about the

Palestinian issue. But there is still a moral and ethical debt that needs to be settled there, with the stagnation of the peace process and what is going on there. What is going on — and what we want to warn the international community about — is a very worrying and dangerous situation. That political conflict, caused by Israel's illegal occupation of the Palestinian territory, has been compounded by violence and attempts to turn the conflict into a religious one, which could complicate the situation in the Middle East even further.

We all agree in this Chamber when we hear about a two-State solution, but the States must be genuinely equal and sovereign. We cannot put together a two-State solution in the face of the current unequal situation in which Zionist terrorists murder the Palestinian people and discriminate against them. As we sit here, some Palestinian citizens, boys and girls and women, are being prevented from gaining access to basic services that are crucial for their survival and are being subjected to cruelty and violence. If we truly believe in creating two States, they must be two equal and sovereign States, and we must join forces to turn the deadlocked peace process into a genuine pathway through dialogue and a peaceful settlement of the situation.

It is extremely disturbing that 70 years after the founding of this Organization we still witness situations that not only violate the rights of the Palestinian people but in which the State of Israel promotes terrorism, which in turn affects the Israeli people themselves. We cannot talk about good terrorism and bad terrorism. When we analyse its causes, we cannot deal with terrorism as such; we can only react to the consequences, which suit the various centres of power that control the daily life of countries and their media and financial resources. We should also be talking about the social and economic model that breeds poverty and misery, but we must also be honest. Terrorist groups do not emerge through spontaneous reproduction. We would like to know who is financing and training those terrorist groups and who is giving them logistical support. That is something that this multilateral forum should perhaps be investigating.

In a forum such as this, 70 years on, as we look at the principles governing the conduct of equal and sovereign States, it is discouraging to listen to the arrogant, unilateral and belligerent exceptionalism that we hear. There should be no room for that here. Either we are a multilateral organization that respects the conduct and standards of international law and the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, or we are conducting an exercise in hypocrisy.

What has the Arab Spring done for these peoples? Has it brought them greater happiness and more democracy? Because what we are hearing today we have heard before, all in the name of democracy, freedom and the people's welfare. The unilateral, imperialistic interventions we have witnessed have bypassed this Organization, contravened the Charter and made people less equal and more unhappy.

What has been the result in Iraq, in Libya, in Afghanistan? The destruction of sovereign States. And now what do we want to do for Syria? The same thing? Can it be that the terrible photograph of a little Syrian boy on a seashore does not affect us or touch our souls and our hearts? How many more children must we see die? We have heard all of this before. I must say it frankly to the world, all of those imperialist wars have been preceded by media wars and lies. It was lies that led to the interventions by those countries in the Middle East and North Africa, and 10 years later, they say that yes, it was a lie, but we made mistakes and we have learned a lesson. But what we see is that no lessons have been learned.

What we realize now is that humankind has not learned the lesson — or, rather, not humankind but the hegemonic power centres of the world. That is why President Maduro has called for a new configuration of geopolitics that can truly guarantee peace, love and happiness for humankind.

We cannot combat terrorism with more violence. We know what happens if we fall in line with those hegemonic centres: we get this kind of theatre. The consequences are greater misery for the people, more violations of human rights and greater inequality. If we are really committed to combating terrorism, we must do it honestly and frankly, and ensure that the lessons of the past make us think and act differently. We cannot continue acting this way, based on lies buttressed by transnational communications conglomerates and the belligerent, arrogant imperialistic power centres of the world. That cannot bring the Syrian people more happiness.

We must respect the principles of national self-determination, territorial integrity and sovereignty, because if we do not, why have we come here for the seventieth anniversary of the United Nations? Just to discuss something very different from what it says in the Organization's founding Charter? Why are we here, then? We are here to enforce those purposes and principles, because we know that in that way we can contribute to humankind and a safer, less violent world, if we really wish to combat terrorism. Today, in Syria, there are more than 500 terrorist groups. Who is funding them? We need an answer to that question. Who is training them and giving them logistical support? What we see are the vicious cycles of imperialism. They are the cycles that first destroy nations and States and then create a space where terrorist groups can proliferate.

Venezuela calls for such a new configuration. We must abandon double standards and two-faced morals and hypocrisy, and join together on this issue honestly and truly prepared to combat terrorism. There should be no excuses about how we do not like a particular leader. The Arab Spring has already showed us what can happen then. We must stop choosing that false and immoral course of action. If we truly want a safer and less violent world, we must fight the causes of terrorism and not its consequences, which is a pretext to intervene in other countries and trample on the Charter of the United Nations.

We call on the United Nations to play its leadership role and to apply international law to thugs roaming the world with their violent armies, maintaining illegal occupations and aggression against peoples.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to Mr. Murray McCully, Minister for Foreign Affairs of New Zealand.

Mr. McCully (New Zealand): New Zealand welcomes this Security Council debate on the resolution of conflicts in the Middle East and North Africa, and we welcome the fact that it involves Foreign Ministers from so many members of the Council.

But we do not welcome the fact that today we will adopt no resolution, and not even agree a presidential statement; we will not stop the fighting. Sadly, this is symbolic of the dysfunction and mistrust that has characterized the Council's performance on Syria and too many of the conflicts that rage in the region today. And it must stop.

In Syria, 250,000 dead people and 12 million displaced by conflict should tell the Council that it must stop — that we must work together to find a resolution. We can all see what the path forward must involve. On the one hand, we must be pragmatic; we must take the situation as it is and the actors who are there, and collectively impose a transition process that will enable institutions and services to operate as we allow Syria to rebuild. On the other, we must uphold the principles of justice and international law that would rule out impunity for those responsible for mass atrocities.

In his introductory remarks to the General Assembly at this year's general debate (see A/70/PV.13), the Secretary- General named five countries whose deep differences need to find resolution if the conflict in Syria is to cease. Each of these five countries, along with most others, has declared its implacable opposition to the brutal terrorist threat that is the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant. To that extent, the concept behind today's debate can claim success.

Where it fails is in its inability to unite these key actors and the members of the Council behind a process that marries the pragmatism that must be employed to stop the conflict with the more principled solutions that will enable Syria to start rebuilding, displaced people to return, and the other conflicts in the region, involving largely the same actors, to be addressed — those in Libya, Iraq, Yemen and Palestine.

Until members of the Council learn to cooperate to broker these compromises, we will live in a world which is eternally destabilized by the rivalries of the Middle East and North Africa; a world of constant workarounds as substitutes for Council leadership, and a growing and ultimately deafening demand for Security Council reform.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Georges Rebelo Pinto Chikoti, Minister for External Relations of the Republic of Angola.

Mr. Chikoti (Angola): First of all, we congratulate the Russian Federation on its accession to the presidency of the Security Council. We thank Minister Lavrov for presiding over such an important and timely debate on the issue of settling conflicts and countering terrorism in the Middle East and North Africa.

We also take this opportunity to praise the Secretary-General for his efforts in the promotion of peace and assure him of our support in these very challenging times.

The current refugee crisis affecting much of the European continent has served as a wake-up call to the entire international community concerning the importance of resolving conflicts by tackling their root causes. That is particularly true of the conflicts that have been plaguing much of the Middle East and North Africa in recent years. We are aware that these conflicts have given rise to a number of terrorist organizations and an extremist ideology that has been growing stronger due in large measure to increased social, ethnic and ideological tensions.

What are those roots, and how can we address them in a comprehensive and sustainable manner, while respecting the principles and requirements of international law? Even though the answer to this question is complex and varies from country to country, we believe that containing extremism, combatting socioeconomic inequality and strengthening education are fundamental approaches to forming sustainable democratic societies in the region and throughout the world at large.

We are of the view that extremism in the Middle East has root causes in foreign interference in the affairs of States, in policies addressed to regime change translated into military interventions, and in the funding and transfer of arms to non-State actors and opposition groups, as well as other political and social grievances that have led many people to join extremist groups out of frustration at these perceived injustices. On the other hand, we must recognize that such grievances are also based on historic humiliations inflicted upon those peoples and are also the cause of their hatred and intolerance towards Western culture and civilization and towards other religions and creeds.

Extremist groups, using condemnable terrorist tactics, seek to impose their culture and values by leaving no space for diversity, whether religious, cultural, political or ideological. We therefore believe that extremism can be successfully countered only by undermining its ideology of intolerance, undertaking an ideological struggle to discredit them, empowering moderate reformists, implementing effective policies of inclusion and dialogue, achieving change and mutual political concessions, respecting fundamental human rights, improving governance and guaranteeing equitable income policies.

However, the fulfilment of such goals entails, first and foremost, putting an end to the protracted conflicts in Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Palestine and Libya, among others, which are having disastrous political and social consequences and catastrophic humanitarian effects on the civilian populations of the region and the entire world.

The Arab Spring, first perceived as an outstanding process of political and social change intended to bring a new era of democracy and prosperity to the Middle East and North Africa, had instead the undesired effect of the disintegration of States and the rise of extremist terrorism and criminal organizations. We therefore believe that gradual change, respect for Government institutions and the rule of law are better suited to ensuring positive reforms rather than revolutionary change. Sudden change, as witnessed during the Arab Spring, lacked structure and leadership, creating an environment conducive to protracted power struggles.

The chaos that has prevailed in Libya since 2011 following the forceful removal of the Al-Qadhafi regime has placed a humanitarian and security crisis on Europe's doorstep, which faces a huge influx of migrants from Africa due to porous borders and the breakdown of the security structure in the country. Criminal networks have taken advantage of the situation and are trafficking migrants across the Mediterranean Sea on a massive scale, in a perilous voyage to escape the desperate conditions of war and social deprivation in their home countries in Africa and the Middle East. In addition, while taking advantage of the situation, terrorist organizations such as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant/Islamic State, Al-Qaida and others thrive in such an environments of chaos and use them as effective recruitment grounds.

If is obvious that terrorism cannot be defeated only by tackling extremist leaders and holding premature elections without the conditions for their holding being met. Extremist ideology must be challenged at its core, which includes two critical elements. The first is the lack of education and a high rate of illiteracy in many Arab and African countries. Education based on the promotion of critical thinking and analysis and successful education reform will engender a new generation of independent-minded citizens, which is a critical element for establishing and maintaining a stable democracy and making effective the multidimensional fight against extremism. The second is to improve the international response mechanism via a coherent and unified structure as a barrier to prevent conflicts from spiralling out of control, as is the case in Syria. Such a mechanism, to be spearheaded by the Security Council, should support States in need of political and social reform, while respecting their sovereignty and territorial integrity.

In conclusion, allow me to reiterate our desire to help facilitate a political solution to the crisis in Libya and to the devastating conflicts in the Middle East. In the meantime, something must be done to curtail the rise of nationalism in Europe upon the arrival of hundreds of thousands of refugees and migrants, by raising awareness among the European population of the causes of such a phenomenon and by promoting the values of tolerance and understanding of the plight of these destitute people in absolute need of help. Moreover, the international community should drastically change many of the options that have been at the heart of its approach to dealing with the situations that prevail in many countries of the Middle East and Africa subject to conflict and deterioration in the humanitarian situation.

Proxy wars by regional Powers, which undermine the often-fragile social cohesion of multicultural societies, have also served the ranks of extremists and terrorists by stoking ethnic tensions. The Security Council, which unfortunately has been deeply divided on the issue of finding appropriate solutions to the conflicts prevailing in the Middle East and North Africa, should lead by example and reaffirm the importance of the peaceful settlement of disputes as stipulated in Chapter VI of the Charter of the United Nations. The Government of Angola reaffirms its commitment to actively support the world coalition to fight the terrorist threat and the spread of extremist ideologies, taking into account the fact that no country is safe from such a threat.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Dato Sri Anifah Aman, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Malaysia.

Dato Sri Anifah Aman (Malaysia): I thank the Russian Federation for convening this meeting. Malaysia welcomes this initiative, through which we hope the Security Council can hold constructive and fruitful discussions on the contemporary conflicts in the Middle East and North Africa region. Revisiting underlying causes connected to the seemingly intractable conflicts in the Middle East and North Africa region at this juncture is a timely initiative. The region and affected countries and societies are perhaps worse off today than when those conflicts began.

Your call, Mr. President, for a comprehensive analysis of the causes of conflicts, for sharing and exchanging views on possible solutions and for a reaffirmation of our common commitment to counter terrorist threats in and beyond the Middle East and North Africa region is, I believe, a useful exercise for the Council. Although the scope is ambitious, we are fully supportive.

Malaysia reiterates its fullest condemnation of all acts, methods and practices of terrorism and reaffirms its commitment to combat terrorism in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and international law. We strongly reject associating terrorism with any race, culture or religion.

There is no one-size-fits-all framework in analysing or addressing the various conflicts in the Middle East and North Africa region. Nevertheless, we may infer some commonalities to better inform our common efforts in countering terrorism and violent extremism.

First, due to current political and security instability, countries such as Iraq, Libya, Syria and Yemen are seen as fertile ground by the terrorists. Terrorist groups exploit the political and security vacuum to increase recruitment, expand territorial control and smuggle in weapons. In those cases, terrorism is not the root cause of conflict but symptomatic of political instability.

Secondly, the presence of terrorist groups in those and other affected countries has deepened sectarian divisions, thereby exacerbating political and social instability. The longer such divisions fester — sowing discord and fear among the populations — the longer it takes for the torn social fabric to be mended. Left unchecked, that will further prolong instability and serve the terrorists' agenda.

Thirdly, the pre-existing situation of gross human rights violations and the dire humanitarian predicament in the affected countries provides a very compelling narrative for recruitment. While the phenomenon of foreign terrorist fighters is not new, the current scale of their involvement in the conflicts in the Middle East and North Africa region is unprecedented.

Furthermore, the terrorists' narrative and propaganda, particularly by Daesh, is expertly communicated at a global level through social media and messaging platforms. To illustrate the pernicious nature and effects of such messaging, consider that in Malaysia, a multi-ethnic, multireligious and multicultural country that is quite geographically distant from the Middle East and North Africa region, authorities have arrested more than 100 persons since

2012 who are suspected of linkages with Daesh and for being or supporting foreign terrorist fighters.

As a further example, a 26-year-old woman, a doctor, was reported to have left her relatively comfortable middle-class life to marry a Daesh fighter in the Middle East whom she had never met and whose language she does not speak. She even detailed her experiences as a Daesh "wife" on social media and encouraged other young women to do the same. In a chilling tweet she said, "A life without terror is like drinking sea water. It keeps you thirsty and causes you to be dehydrated."

Against such deeply ingrained extremism, it seems clear to me that the war must be won not through the force of arms, but through a triumph of minds, hearts and wills.

At the national level, Malaysia has intensified efforts to prevent terrorist groups and cells from operating in the country, particularly for recruitment and fundraising purposes. In November last year, the Government presented a white paper in Malaysia's Parliament on the threat posed by Daesh and on possible responses. At the same time, existing legislation has been strengthened, including on countering and preventing the financing of terrorism. New legislation has also been enacted — namely, the prevention of terrorism act of 2015 and the special measures against terrorism in foreign countries cct of 2015 — with a view to addressing the foreign terrorist fighters phenomenon. A key feature of the prevention of terrorsim act that I want to share with the Council concerns its provisions on rehabilitation and de-radicalization. The assumption underlying those provisions is rooted in the belief that the fight against terrorism cannot be won through force or punitive measures alone.

On the social and education front, authorities are engaging closely with religious and community leaders to nip radicalization and extremism in the bud, as well as to disseminate clear and accurate information on the true teachings of the various faiths and religions.

In terms of capacity for outreach, awareness-raising and research, we are fortunate to have the Southeast Asia Regional Centre for Counter-Terrorism in Kuala Lumpur. Additionally, as stated by my Prime Minister at yesterday's summit on countering the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and countering violent extremism, Malaysia is actively exploring the possibility of establishing a regional digital counter-messaging communications centre.

Malaysia remains convinced that, in the context of the situation in the Middle East, the threat posed by terrorism can be effectively addressed by the international community only if it is prepared to take a self-critical and unbiased look at the root causes of terrorism and act to redress grievances, injustices and gross violations of human rights.

We cannot allow the plight of long-suffering Palestinians, living under occupation, to be cynically exploited by terrorist groups and according to their narrative, couched in terms of good versus evil. In our view, a just and durable solution to the situation in Palestine is long-overdue. At this point in time, prolonged occupation also fuels the terrorist narrative and may also contribute to radicalization.

Malaysia looks forward to engaging with Council members on the draft resolution of which the President spoke about earlier. Malaysia remains committed to achieving unity of purpose and of action by the Council.

In conclusion, I reiterate Malaysia's firm belief that, in order for the Council to continue to play a constructive and positive role in conflicts in the Middle East and North Africa region, it must find the will to overcome differences and speak in one voice.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. John Kerry, Secretary of State of the United States of America.

Mr. Kerry (United States of America): I thank you, Mr. President, for this chance to address my colleagues on the Security Council. I appreciate the fact that Russia's presidency has chosen to focus on this issue. I welcome the opportunity to talk about the urgent challenge of countering terrorism in the Middle East, North Africa and elsewhere.

This is a topic that the Council has explored many times. Going back to the attacks of 11 September 2001, and even prior to that, we have come together fairly often to condemn terrorism and to take concerted action to counter violent extremist organizations. Therefore, this is not a debate about goals — I do not think. We all oppose the aggressive ambitions of organizations such as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and Al-Qaida, as well as well as groups that imitate them or are affiliated with them. We all oppose the atrocities that they commit, and we all want to end the suffering that they continue to inflict. There is no debate about that. The question that we face is how one best does that. There are basic principles that we believe should guide our strategy.

First, in confronting terrorism, we have to take a comprehensive approach. That was quite eloquently spoken about by our Heads of State at the summit on countering violent extremism that President Obama hosted. There was a great deal of discussion. I thought that there were some very articulate statements about how one should approach the root causes. We have to deny safehavens, disrupt the flow of foreign fighters, block access to financing and expose the lies that terrorist groups propagate. The latter is particularly challenging in this world of constant media and non-stop access, 24/7/365. We are living in a very different world, and terrorists have learned how to exploit media in all kinds of ways.

We also need to exert pressure in support of peace, perhaps one of the most important components of our responsibility, in places such as Libya, for instance, where instability fuels the kind of chaos and fear in which extremist organizations thrive. We see that now with the presence of ISIL in Libya. Accordingly, that is the fundamental strategy that we have laid out for countering violent extremism. We have adopted that strategy. We are strongly engaged in implementing it. We welcome the large number of nations that have joined as international actors in thecounter-ISIL coalition, the Global Counterterrorism Forum and other regional organizations. But, obviously, more needs to be done.

We have been able to counter some foreign fighters and keep them from travelling, but still too many of them have been able to travel and reach their destinations. We have been able to slow down and stop some elements of the financing, but too much money is still able to reach terrorist activities and actors. Our goal is to take urgent actions against immediate threats, while also facing up to longer-term measures that prevent the recruitment of future generations of terrorists, improve governance and enhance economic opportunities so that radicalization is less likely. That is an enormous challenge for all of us; we know it. There are countless countries in which 60 to 65 per cent of the population are under the age of 30 or 25, and in other cases under the age of 18. Unless they find opportunities and options, their minds will be stolen and their opportunities will be robbed forever by bad actors who grab them in that vacuum. We also need to improve governance and enhance economic opportunities so that radicalization is less likely. Too many places still see too much corruption, and corruption robs the populations of their due and possibilities.

In each of those areas, we intend to work hard with all members of the Security Council and with others not present to improve our chance for success by working with the concerned elements of civil society, including non-governmental organizations, religious leaders and the private sector. Meanwhile, we have to continue our efforts to alleviate the immediate hardships that terrorist are causing. While we have been pushing humanitarian relief into areas, the international community absolutely has to do more. We are staring at a humanitarian catastrophe unfolding not in one or two places, but simultaneously in multiple places. The humanitarian disaster that we are witnessing, in and of itself, should be enough reason to take on ISIL. Over the past several days, that has been a major topic of our discussions here. But it has to remain a core concern for all of us in the weeks to come. Every Nation can do more. Both resolutions 2139 (2014) and 2165 (2014) — everyone around this table voted for them — clearly require humanitarian access to besieged areas and specifically call for an end to barrel bombs and the use of starvation as a weapon of war.

I would now like to add a few thoughts specifically pertaining to Syria, ISIL and Russia. The United States supports any genuine effort to fight ISIL and Al-Qaida-affiliated groups, especially the Al-Nusra Front. If Russia's recent actions, and those now ongoing, reflect a genuine commitment to defeat that organization, then we are prepared to welcome those efforts and find a way to de-conflict our operations, thereby multiplying the military pressure on ISIL and affiliated groups. But we must not and will not be confused in our fight against ISIL with support for Al-Assad. Moreover, we have also made clear that we would have grave concerns should Russia strike areas where ISIL- and Al-Qaida-affiliated targets are not operating. Strikes of that kind would bring into question Russia's real intentions in fighting ISIL or protecting the Al-Assad regime.

We have informed Russia that we are prepared to hold these de-confliction talks as early as possible this week. But let me be clear: the United States and the coalition will continue our ongoing air operations, as we have from the very beginning. We have conducted a number of strikes against ISIL targets in Syria over the past 24 hours, including just an hour ago, and these strikes will continue.

Let me be clear: the coalition that we have built, more than 60 countries strong, has been taking on ISIL for more than a year by liberating Sinjar mountain, liberating Kobani, liberating Tikrit, where now more than 100,000 residents have been able to return to their homes and resume their lives, defending Mosul dam, defending Haditha, protecting Baghdad, rescuing endangered minorities, killing ISIL leaders and facilitators, and taking away the entire northern border of Syria for ISIL east of the Euphrates River.

At the same time, we have mounted a comprehensive campaign to cut terrorist financing, curb the recruitment of foreign fighters and expose the lies that ISIL has perpetrated. Today, even as we speak, south of Kirkuk, Kurdish peshmerga are heroically liberating villages from ISIL under the cover of coalition airstrikes. In addition, we continue to admire the courage and the resilience that has been demonstrated for four long years of struggle by the legitimate opposition to Al-Assad.

Let me remind the Council that coalition air operations are grounded in well-established military procedures firmly based in international law and the requests of neighbouring States for collective self-defence under Article 51 of the United Nations Charter. The foundation has not changed, and we will continue our mission with the full sanction of international law. Pursuant to these procedures in Syria over the past year, the coalition has now conducted nearly 3,000 airstrikes against ISIL targets, and we are now in position, with France, Australia, Canada, Turkey and other coalition partners joining the campaign, to dramatically accelerate our efforts. That is what we will do.

Over the coming weeks, we will be continuing our flights out of Incirlik base in Turkey to apply constant pressure on strategic areas held by ISIL in north-west Syria. We will also be sustaining our support to anti-ISIL fighters in north-east Syria. These efforts will put greater pressure on ISIL's operational areas, and we will ensure, through precision airstrikes, that ISIL leaders do not have any sanctuary anywhere on the ground in Syria.

So ISIL will soon face increasing pressure from multiple directions across the battlefield in Syria and Iraq. But as we have said from the start, and as the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex) codifies, this fight cannot be won in the military sphere. It will require a political solution to the crisis of Syria.

One thing is certain: the vast majority of States represented around this table know that the ISIL forces and ISIL itself cannot be defeated as long as Bashar Al-Assad remains president of Syria. It cannot happen by definition of the lines of this battle. It cannot happen because of who has lined up with whom and because of the nature of these protagonists. The reason for that is defined in the beginning by how this fight itself began. This fight began when young people, young Syrians looking for a future, wanting nothing more than opportunity in jobs and education, went out to demonstrate for the future and to claim the aspirations of young people, and Al-Assad sent his thugs out to beat them up. The parents were outraged by the fact that their children, demonstrating peacefully, had been beaten up, and they went out with their kids, and they were met with bullets. That is how this whole thing began — people in a country looking for a future who are instead met with repression, with torture, with gassing, with barrel bombs. Al-Assad will never be accepted by those whom he has harmed; it will never be possible for him to become a legitimate leader in future or to lead a reconciliation or unification of the country. That cannot happen until he makes clear his willingness to actually heal the nation, end the war and decline to be part of the long-term future.

Today we must be focused on finding a solution that will stop the killing and lay the groundwork for a Government that the Syrian people themselves can support. We know that the terrorists can neither unite the country nor govern it. We know that Al-Assad can neither unite the country nor govern it. Neither extreme offers the solution that we need and want. What is more, our ability to develop a credible international political process would be a farce from the beginning, incredible enough that it would not stop people from fighting, if it were perceived as a way to extend or strengthen Al-Assad's hold on power.

As President Obama said on Monday, the United States is prepared to work with any nation, including Russia and Iran, to resolve the conflict, but we must recognize that there cannot be, after so much bloodshed, so much carnage, a simple return to the prewar status quo. My colleagues from the Government of Russia have argued that we must support Al-Assad in order to defeat ISIL. But the reality is that Al-Assad has rarely chosen himself to fight ISIL. As the terrorists made inroads throughout large swathes of Syria and Iraq, raping, enslaving and murdering civilians along the way, the Syrian regime did not try to stop them. Instead, it focused all of its military power on moderate opposition groups that were fighting for a voice in Syria.

Make no mistake: the answer to the Syrian civil war cannot be found in a military alliance with Al-Assad. But I am convinced that it can be found through a broadly supported diplomatic initiative aimed at a negotiated political transition, a transition that has been accepted by the Security Council and by participants of the Permanent Five, consistent with the Geneva communiqué, which would unite all Syrians who reject dictatorship and terrorism and want to build a stable and united society.

So, in conclusion, I call on all Governments concerned, including Russia and Syria, to support a United Nations initiative to broker a political transition. Further delay is unconscionable. The opportunity is before us, and if we can succeed in marginalizing the terrorists in Syria and in bringing the country together, we can all of us together do exactly what this was set up to do — the Security Council and this institution. We could strike a huge blow against violent extremism, not only in Syria but also in Iraq, across the Middle East and around the world. Nothing would be more in keeping with the high purpose for which the Council was created 70 years ago, and nothing would better serve the interests of the people that all of us represent. I hope that we can achieve that.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to Mr. Philip Hammond, Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Hammond (United Kingdom): I welcome the opportunity to contribute to this important debate. None of us doubts that violent extremist ideologies across North Africa and the Middle East constitute a grave threat to international peace and security, regional stability and peaceful civilian life across the world. In confronting them, we are waging a generational struggle in which we will prevail only if we speak with one voice and act with one will.

At the same time, we have to give hope to those who despair of a better future and may be tempted to join the violent extremists, whether they are frustrated Palestinians who see no hope of resuming the Middle East peace process, Iraqi Sunnis who await the genuine inclusiveness that Prime Minister Al Abadi has promised, or Syrian moderate oppositionists who see no other way to fight Al-Assad.

The coalition to fight the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) being led by the United States has brought together more than 60 countries, from the region and beyond, to take the fight to ISIL. The United Kingdom has played a major role in delivering coalition air strikes in Iraq and remains committed to the coalition as the best mechanism to mount a unified and comprehensive response. We have already met with some tangible success, helping to halt ISIL's precipitous advance across Iraq last year and over time removing its freedom to operate in more than 30 per cent of the Iraqi territory that it once held, as well as cutting financing sources and countering its social media propaganda. But there is much more to do, and we do not shrink from the reality that this will be a long haul.

There is also universal agreement that Syrians have suffered too much for far too long. We must come to their aid. I want to take this opportunity to acknowledge the generosity of Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon, in particular, in hosting millions of refugees fleeing the violence of the Syrian civil war over years. The United Kingdom has given over £1.6 billion in humanitarian assistance towards the Syrian crisis and neighbouring countries hosting refugees.

The crisis in Syria is reverberating globally, both in the violent extremism that it has helped foster and the migration crisis that it has precipitated. There will be no lasting solutions to these challenges without lasting peace and stability in Syria. We have to do more than respond to the humanitarian consequences of the conflict if we are to achieve that stability.

But to help Syria navigate its way out of this crisis, we must be clear about how it arrived there in the first place. It was the Al-Assad regime that led Syria into the crisis. Its brutal repression of peaceful protesters, which we just heard about from Secretary Kerry, followed by the years of indiscriminate attacks on civilians that ensued, especially through the indiscriminate use of barrel bombs, was the root cause. The Al-Assad regime created the environment in which extremism, and ISIL in particular, have flourished.

We therefore reject the advice of those who say the poison of Al-Assad is the cure for the cancer of ISIL. It cannot be. It was Al-Assad who released jihadis in the early stages of the conflict. It is Al-Assad who continues to trade with ISIL even now. And it is Al-Assad's forces that are killing more civilians in Syria each month than any other actor. Al-Assad has been and remains one of ISIL's greatest recruiting sergeants, and his forces remain focused on the destruction of moderate opposition groups and civilian population centres. Any attempt to ally with Al-Assad against ISIL will only strengthen ISIL, making it de facto leaders of the Sunni resistance to the Al-Assad regime.

We owe it to the Syrian people to secure a future free both of the terrorism of ISIL and the tyranny of Al-Assad, because Syria can be an effective partner in overcoming violent extremism only if it has a representative Government, a Government capable of working with the international community to confront ISIL militarily and counter its twisted narrative. The best contribution Al-Assad and those around him can now make is to put their country's interests before their own and step aside to allow a political transition that will end the civil war and allow Syrians to unite in the struggle against Islamist extremism. What is needed is a transition that will provide representative and inclusive Government and enable the Syrian people to begin the task of rebuilding their nation. The best contribution we can make is to support the efforts of Special Envoy of the Secretary-General Staffan de Mistura in negotiating such a transition, while standing ready to work with all partners to make this happen.

Over the last few weeks, the realities on the ground in Syria have changed. Russian intervention has strengthened regime morale and reinforced regime capability. Russia has taken a major decision and assumed a heavy responsibility by this public propping up of Al-Assad while he continues to terrorize his own people. The international community will expect Russia to use the increased influence it has to stop the use of weapons like barrel bombs that have targeted and killed thousands of innocent civilians and prevent any use of chemicals as weapons by the regime.

We have heard over the last few days about Russia's intention to use force against ISIL, and we welcome that focus. But for the reasons I have already outlined, it is not possible to be an effective part of the fight against ISIL and at the same time — with the same force — be attacking the moderate oppositionists resisting the oppression of the Al-Assad regime. To say it clearly: actions in support of the regime are incompatible with the effective prosecution of the war against ISIL in Syria. This is not a moral judgment, it is a pragmatic judgment.

We heard this morning of the first Russian air strikes in Syria. Russia will be well aware of the message that those strikes will deliver. The targets of those strikes will not have been selected carelessly or at random. It is very important that Russia be able to confirm to the international community that the military action it has undertaken in Syria this morning is directed at ISIL and Al-Qaida-affiliated targets only, and not at moderate opponents of the Al-Assad regime.

I have also listened to those who say that the Syrian people should decide in elections whether Al-Assad stays or goes. I have to say that this is an illusion. It denies the reality on the ground. How can there be fair elections in a country that has lost a quarter of a million dead and has 12 million of its citizens displaced, many of them outside its borders? Healing those wounds can start only when Al-Assad leaves, whether that is at the start of a transition or later in the process.

There is of course a way forward. If we can see an end to the barrel bombing and the indiscriminate attacks on civilians, if we can encourage de-escalation on the battlefield so as to reduce casualties, if we can at the same time embark upon a political process that leads to a new Syria with a new Government without Al-Assad, then we could focus opposition strength on fighting ISIL. The question for the Council is whether those who have the influence to deliver this outcome are willing to use that influence to do so. I call upon all Security Council members to unite in order to deliver a future for Syria.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Heraldo Muñoz, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Chile.

Mr. Muñoz (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank you, Mr. President, and the Russian Federation for convening today's open debate, which gives us an opportunity to reflect on how terrorism accentuates the precariousness of societies destabilized by conflict. The Security Council must always be prepared to take collective, preventive and effective action to safeguard international peace and security.

The situation in the Middle East and North Africa is a cause for concern for the international community — who can doubt that? — because the activities of armed and terrorist groups are worsening the cycles of instability and multiple tensions among communities that need to strengthen a coexistence based on cohesion, inclusiveness and diversity, as shared principles and values. Those principles represent the heritage of humankind. Their application is essential in the efforts to ensure confidence and trust in the region, halt the renting of the social fabric and create an atmosphere of better cooperation, or at least understanding, among States, religions and ethnic groups.

The conflicts in the region have been worsened by terrorism associated with fundamentalism, which has threatened the very existence of countries when such groups control territory and establish an Administration based on terror and intolerance. Recent experience has shown us that the use of force can reduce the military capacity of terrorist groups, but it cannot prevent the diffusion of ideas to generate new recruits and inspire violent ambitions in people vulnerable to their message of extremism. It is therefore imperative to replace their terrorist ideology by an alliance of shared values that includes a preventive, multinational focus that would promote specific actions at the local, national and global levels to encourage interreligious and intercultural dialogue.

The voices of those in civil society with an influence at the community level can play an important role in that task. That central notion was addressed by the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Council members meeting at the Counter-Terrorism Committee (CTC) meeting held in Madrid in July. The meeting also took up the issue of foreign terrorist fighters, with a draft ministerial declaration having been prepared for adoption by the CTC. This is an issue on which it seems to us that cooperation is essential.

The Islamic State is a destabilizing factor in the Syrian and Iraqi conflicts. Their presence and spread into other countries and regions is alarming. In the areas that they control, they are deceptively presenting themselves as a political and social movement that is filling an order and unity vacuum in communities polarized by conflict that lack governance and economic, political and social opportunities.

I would like to recall that, during Chile's presidency of the Council in January, we identified the linkage between inclusive development and international peace and security (see S/PV.7361). We did so because we believe that the underlying causes of these crises are related to various forms of exclusion — whether socioeconomic, gender-based, ethnic, tribal, religious or ideological — that can have an impact on local and global levels as well, thereby posing a greater challenge. It is therefore essential to address these failings urgently. Whether or not it involves domestic processes, for which each State has the primary responsibility, the international community and the Security Council should be part of a collective effort. It requires the joint, concerted and effective action of the Council and the entire international community to deal with the gravest humanitarian problems afflicting millions of people in the Middle East and North Africa.

Chile will make its contribution to host Syrian refugees. I would like to highlight that Chile has already made a contribution by receiving Iraqi refugees. But it is also necessary for there to be real commitment on the part of political actors in every affected State so as to stop the violence, resolve differences through dialogue and implement the resolutions of the Council. In that regard, we certainly appreciate the efforts of the Secretary-General's Envoys and Special Representatives.

Chile believes that there are factors that encourage terrorism. It is urgent to resume the peace talks between Israel and Palestine on the basis of two sovereign States living alongside one another in peace and security. Turning away from that path will only bring more conflict and terror.

We would also like to express our decisive support in continuing to work with the international community to eradicate terrorism, which violates fundamental values. And I want to reassert the importance that all measures in this fight should always be undertaken while respecting the rule of law, in conformity with international law, particularly international human rights law, the rights of refugees and international humanitarian law as set out in Human Rights Council resolution 29/9.

The Security Council has worked tirelessly to achieve the necessary consensus. It has adopted resolutions to strengthen the multilateral mechanism to combat terrorism and the flow of foreign terrorist fighters. That strategy must also be bolstered. The inescapable challenge remains focusing efforts to ensure the full and effective implementation of those resolutions. That responsibility lies with all States Members of the Organization. We know that it is complex and not easy, but we are facing a global threat that is aggravated by the attempt to impose religious convictions and interpretations. There is no room for indifference or inaction.

Finally, I would like to reiterate that prevention is a central element in opening up avenues for greater understanding and cooperation aimed at discrediting the notion of terrorism being an alternative to motivate those who aspire to a more inclusive society with greater opportunities.

Mrs. Ogwu (Nigeria): I thank you, Mr. President, and the delegation of the Russian Federation for organizing this debate on a subject of remarkable significance for international peace and security. This debate is propitious, and the unprecedented presence of so many Ministers in this forum serves to accentuate the global determination for concerted action.

Today's debate is taking place against the backdrop of conflicts in the Middle East and North Africa that pose a great threat to the peace and security of the entire region and beyond. Those conflicts have been compounded by the activities of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), Al-Qaida and other terrorist groups operating across the region.

Of all the conflicts in the Middle East, the most protracted is the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The lack of progress in the Middle East peace process is one of the drivers of instability in that region. The current stalemate does not offer a sustainable solution to the question of Palestine. What is required is political will on the part of Israeli and Palestinian leaders to return to negotiations on the basis of the relevant Security Council resolutions, the Madrid principles, the Quartet road map, the Arab Peace Initiative and existing agreements between them. That is the only path to a sustainable and peaceful resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. We take this opportunity to reaffirm our unwavering support for a two-State solution, with Israel and Palestine existing side by side in peace and security.

The lack of progress in the Middle East peace process has in turn heightened the threat of terrorism, especially manifested in the Middle East and North African regions. Attacks by ISIL, the Al-Nusra Front, Al-Qaida and other terrorist groups have claimed the lives of thousands of civilians and displaced many more. Those attacks have been orchestrated by violent extremists who perpetrate acts of anarchy, insecurity and injustice under the banner of religion. They target women, children and other vulnerable groups. They commit war crimes and crimes against humanity with impunity. The brutality of those groups offends our common humanity and demands that the international community take decisive action to neutralize them.

In recent times, terrorist groups have also developed a penchant for acquiring property and territory. The emergence of ISIL and its control of territory in Syria and Iraq have changed the political and security landscape of the Middle East. ISIL has become a grave threat to the unity and territorial integrity of Syria and Iraq. Terrorist groups also threaten Libya and Yemen. In all those cases, those groups have taken advantage of the political and security vacuum created by conflicts to establish themselves and advance their hideous agenda. The need for the international community to address those threats is today very urgent.

Another dimension of the terrorist threat is the proliferation of foreign terrorist fighters. Studies indicate that this is not a new phenomenon. Many of today's foreign terrorist fighters have fought as comrades in other developing networks in the process. It is those networks, aided by modern information and communication technology, that are now being exploited to recruit new fighters.

As of 2013, it was estimated that there were over 5,000 foreign terrorist fighters in Syria alone. Reports indicate that more than 25,000 foreign terrorist fighters from over 100 countries may now be engaged in the Middle East and North African regions alongside local terrorist groups.

The indication today is that foreign terrorist fighters represent a threat on several levels: first, in their States of origin; secondly, in transit States; and, thirdly, in the destination States. Any effort to address this menace will require cooperation, not only among the affected States but indeed by the entire international community.

Ultimately, what is required to counter the terrorist threat is enhanced cooperation in law enforcement, intelligence sharing and capacity-building. The relevant Security Council resolutions, the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and other regional instruments already provide an adequate framework for the necessary international cooperation. We do not need new road maps.

We are confident that, with all States working concertedly and with closer coordination by the

Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force, the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate and other United Nations counter-terrorism bodies, the challenge of terrorism in the Middle East, North Africa and other parts of the world, which exacerbates conflict, can be decisively addressed. We hope that this is a beginning.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I wish to remind all speakers to limit their statements to no more than four minutes in order to enable the Council to carry out its work expeditiously. Delegations with lengthy statements are kindly requested to circulate their texts in writing and to deliver a condensed version when speaking in the Chamber. I also ask that speakers deliver their statements at a reasonable speed so that accurate interpretation can be provided.

I wish to inform all concerned that we will be continuing the open debate through the lunch hour, as we have a large number of speakers.

I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Ibrahim Al-Jaafari, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Iraq.

Mr. Al-Jaafari (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, allow me to congratulate the Russian Federation on its assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month. We also thank the Russian presidency for its transparent efforts in organizing the Council's work. I also thank Nigeria for its efforts during its presidency of the Security Council last month. I also commend Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on his briefing on the subject of terrorism.

We have reiterated to the Security Council the importance of promoting cooperation among all States. Any hesitation will only strengthen terrorist organizations and enable their expansion to other regions and States. The most recent unfortunate incidents — whether in Tunisia, Egypt, Syria, France or in other countries and regions — are proof of what we have said on many occasions.

My country, Iraq, on its own behalf and on behalf of States throughout the world, has been combating terrorism and extremism. That leads us to underscore, once again, the need to promote international cooperation. We must implement the commitments and resolutions of the Security Council, in particular resolutions 2170 (2014), 2178 (2014) and 2199 (2015), which condemn the recruitment of fighters by the Daesh terrorist organization and establish the obligation of States to prevent the flow of foreign terrorist fighters and limit the funding for the operations of organizations such as Daesh and other associated armed groups via the sale of oil and the trafficking in works of art and other forms of robbery and illicit acts.

The attacks by Daesh against the Government of Iraq and that terrorist organization's occupation of our cities and towns has led to an exodus of more than 2.5 million citizens who have fled the group's savagery. The Government of Iraq is working to take every possible step to protect displaced persons, including children, women, religious and ethnic minorities, and to pave the way for their return by ensuring their security. The Government has also taken steps to meet the urgent needs of a growing number of internally displaced persons, despite Iraq's budget deficit as a result of the decrease in the price of oil, which is the major source of our budgetary income. We also have significant military budgetary expenses.

Iraq is facing enormous and dangerous challenges because of the savage terrorist attacks that directly target markets, schools, hospitals and thousands of innocent civilians. The terrorists systematically violate human rights, and some of their violations can be considered war crimes and crimes against humanity.

My country's Government continues to provide support at many levels. We assist local communities so that they can take on more responsibility in recovering the areas controlled by Daesh. We have also taken measures to ensure stability in the areas that have been recovered from Daesh and to ensure their reconstruction. My Government is working to promote efforts and participation at the national level aimed at achieving greater reconciliation by holding regular meetings in order to reach consensus on a global strategy to enhance national unity and to promote peace and stability.

We are convinced that national unity is the most effective way to tackle violent extremism in Iraq. The occupation of Mosul took place 15 months ago, and the international coalition was established 12 months ago. The Iraqi forces are continuing their heroic struggle to defeat the Daesh terrorist organization with the support of the friendly air forces of the international coalition. That has led to the defeat of Daesh in the region that forms a ring around Baghdad, as well as Baiji, Ishaqi, Salah Al-Din and Fallujah.

I would like to draw attention to the number of States from which terrorists are flowing in. Last year there were 82 such States; today there are 100. That situation requires additional rosbust measures on the part of those countries. Terrorism now exists in a broader swathe of territory, extending into Europe, Canada and Australia. It is no longer limited to a single State of the Middle East.

Finally, my country's Government thanks those countries taking part in the international coalition, as well as the States of the European Union.

We also underscore that the violation of the Al-Aqsa Mosque is a very dangerous incident. We are compelled to raise this issue once again because there is an intention to violate religious sites in order to further finance terrorism.

Iraq's experience is very important for the coexistence between Shiites and Sunnis. Iraq has a rich history of coexistence among different religions. We therefore thank all the countries that have taken part in the international coalition and the States that are combating terrorism for their logistical and military support to my Government, our army and our people. We thank them for their efforts, which have enhanced Iraq's own efforts aimed at recovering the territory occupied by the Daesh terrorist group. We thank the Security Council for urging the international community to assist Iraq in combating Daesh and associated armed groups.

We call on the international community and regional partners to work to combat and defeat terrorism. We cannot put an end to terrorism unless we have a legitimate and coherent structure that includes the participation of all States and international and regional organizations and that can ensure more effective cooperation.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Sheikh Sabah Khalid Al Hamad Al Sabah, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the State of Kuwait.

Mr. Al Sabah (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): I am honoured to deliver this statement on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), in Kuwait's capacity as Chair the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers at its current session.

At the outset, I am pleased to congratulate you, Sir, on your successful presidency of the Security Council during this month, and on the concept note (S/2015/678, annex) prepared on the subject of this important meeting. We also thank the delegation of Nigeria, a member State of the OIC, for presiding over the Council and the successful conduct of its work during the past month.

The settlement of conflicts in the Middle East and North Africa and countering terrorist threat in the region are the prime concern of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and its members. Those issues top the list of priorities in the Organization's meetings, and many meetings have been held to discuss them. The OIC has adopted many resolutions and initiatives to deal with the issues in regular and extraordinary sessions. It has made efforts in supporting those of the United Nations and its various bodies aimed at finding solutions to the conflicts that have spread across the region and threaten international peace and security.

The circumstances prevailing in the region are exceptional and difficult. There are enormous unprecedented security and political risks and challenges. The violence and turmoil that erupted in more than one country over the past few years are still going on unabated and have caused utter chaos and instability, producing dangerous fallout and consequences that everyone is suffering from.

Due to the instability and the continued circle of violence and fighting, many countries in the region have witnessed a remarkable decrease in various levels of economic and social growth, thus exacerbating the plight of the peoples in the affected countries. Currently, millions of people are displaced persons, refugees or immigrants. For the first time, the international community is facing a humanitarian crisis of great magnitude, wherein the number of people in the world in need of humanitarian assistance exceeds 60 million, the majority of whom are from the Middle East and North Africa.

The tragic circumstances witnessed by the region have provided fertile ground for terrorist and extremist groups, who exploit them to disseminate their aberrant and destructive thoughts. They have used parts of the areas under their control as a launching pad to commit the most horrible crimes, such as killing, displacing and terrorizing the innocent and committing serious violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law.

Some terrorist groups justify their heinous and extremist acts as being inspired by the teachings of the true Islamic religion, although they are far removed from the principals and the basic concepts of the tolerant Islamic Sharia. Such acts run counter to all moral values and principles and pillars of our Islamic teachings. The Islamic religion is a religion of love and peace that calls for tolerance, solidarity and moderation; it rejects fanaticism and extremism. Therefore, all the Islamic States condemn terrorism in all its forms and manifestations wherever it is committed, regardless of its motives and justifications.

The Organization also rejects linking the crimes committed by such groups with the Islamic religion. Terrorism has no religion and is not tied to any one country, race or culture. It cannot be fought through confrontation or conflict with a great religion like Islam, stoking feelings of hatred and incitement and promoting erroneous concepts about Islam that contribute to the growth of Islamophobia across Western countries, because of which millions of members of the Islamic communities suffer.

In the framework of combating terrorism and extremism, the OIC has established partnerships with international and regional organizations and with relevant governmental centres for combating terrorism and extremism. It has convened numerous meetings and taken initiatives to highlight the values of moderation, justice and equality and is paying the necessary attention to studying the phenomenon of terrorism and extremism. The OIC has devised practical plans to deal with the various dimensions and roots of that phenomenon. In addition, an emergency meeting of the OIC Executive Committee was convened at the ministerial level on 15 February 2015. Another special meeting was held in the State of Kuwait on 15 May 2015 to develop an active strategy to counter terrorism, violent extremism and Islamophobia.

The failure of the international community, represented by the Security Council, to resolve conflicts and grave political and security crises in the region has contributed to the exacerbation of suffering and to a further deterioration of the economic and social conditions. As time passes, those crises have become more intertwined, difficult and complicated, thus increasing the costs incurred by the international community in attempts to resolve them and to limit their consequences and their negative impact on international peace and security.

Perhaps the most outstanding example of that failure is the fact that the Palestinian question, the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict, has remained without solution. The stalemate in the peace process and the persistence of the occupying Power in pursuing its practices and settlement policies, its blockade of the Gaza Strip and its continued aggression against the Palestinian people and their properties — in gross violation of international law and United Nations resolutions and without any accountability for or condemnation of such acts — have created of a state of despair and distrust in international justice. That failure has also undermined credibility of the international community with regard to standing by the Palestinian people in their quest to obtain their legitimate rights. The latest aggression against the sanctity of the Al-Aqsa Mosque, without any regard for the feelings of the Islamic world, is merely one link in a chain of oppressive and systematic measures to Judaize the city of Jerusalem and alter its demographic nature.

In conclusion, we call upon the Security Council to assume its responsibilities, as stipulated by the Charter of the United Nations, and to work on implementing its resolutions in support of the rights of the Palestinian people. That includes their right to self-determination and the establishment of an independent State on their territory, with East Jerusalem as its capital, as well as the full Israeli withdrawal from Palestinian and Arab territories occupied since 1967, including the Syrian Arab Golan and the occupied Lebanese territories, and finding an equitable and just solution to the question of the Palestinian refugees, according to the relevant resolutions of international legitimacy.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Walid Al-Moualem, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. Al-Moualem (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to commend you, Sir, on convening this meeting of the Security Council on the maintenance of international peace and security under the theme "Settlement of conflicts in the Middle East and North Africa and countering the terrorist threat in the region".

The Charter of the United Nations confers upon the Security Council the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. What has the Council done to combat terrorism, which is seen in Syria and Iraq and now is spreading to other countries of the world? What has the Council done to implement its resolutions, especially resolutions 2170 (2014), 2178 (2014) and 2199 (2015), so as to help our people, who are paying a high price with their own lives and through the destruction of their heritage? What has the Council done for the men, women and children suffering from terrorism in Syria? What has it done to stop the countries that are supporting terrorism and facilitating the members of Daesh, Al-Nusra and other armed groups affiliated with Al-Qaida, which are committing atrocious crimes in Syria and Iraq? If we compare the current situation of those groups to what it was before those resolutions were adopted, I think we would be right in asking whether the resolutions have constrained their actions in any way. And the answer to that is no. In fact, these armed groups have been strengthened. They are more powerful, brutal and cruel and they are better armed.

Let us review what some of the permanent members of the Council have done in that regard, in leading an international coalition. What has that coalition achieved, one year after it was formed and close to a year since it began its air strikes, which we have heard about but whose results have not really been apparent? The answer is that those countries are conducting their actions in the name of a strategy that is supposedly aimed at destroying Daesh in Iraq and Syria. But its real aim is quite different, and the evidence for that is that these organizations have become stronger. They are better financed and armed and, as I have already said, more brutal than ever. The countries that support and finance those groups have continued to finance, protect and support them. Those countries include, in particular, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and other Western countries well known to the Council. Those who really do want to fight terrorism in Syria should coordinate and cooperate their efforts with the Government of Syria, whose army and military are fighting terrorism and doing their duty by protecting the people against the terrorist groups.

The actions of the United Kingdom and France in Syrian air space are contrary to the Charter of the United Nations and international law, as well as a flagrant violation of Syria's national sovereignty. Those who genuinely wish to combat terrorism must coordinate their efforts with the Syrian Government. What we heard today from the representative of France clearly illustrates the true role that France has played in supporting terrorism. Such sentiments are inappropriate and should be considered unworthy of a permanent member of the Security Council. The international community is already aware of the destructive role that France has played in Libya.

On the other hand, we strongly endorse the initiative of President Putin, who has called for the creation of a regional and international coalition to fight terrorism, as personified by Daesh and the Al-Nusra Front, in order to put an end to the very existence of those groups, with, of course Syria's essential participation. We urge the countries of the region to comply with the Security Council's resolutions on combating terrorism, in a preventive, defensive role, and to join with this coalition. In that regard, I fully endorse Foreign Minister Lavrov's comments on the launch of military action against terrorism in Syria, at Syria's request and again in coordination with the Government.

Syria will continue its fight against the terrorism represented by Daesh, the Al-Nusra Front and other Al-Qaida affiliates, regardless of the price we may have to pay. I would like to urge the Council to fight on the side of truth and implement its resolutions so that we can put an end to the influx of terrorists coming to Syria to build what they call a caliphate. That caliphate will not end at the borders of Iraq or Syria. The leaders of the movement have stated clearly that they want to conquer Mecca and the whole of Europe. If we do not confront them, their atrocious crimes will not emd at the borders of Iraq, Syria or Libya. They will spread everywhere, and the terrorists will come knocking at the doors of those who supported them.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Frank-Walter Steinmeier, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Federal Republic of Germany.

Mr. Steinmeier (Germany): We have been speaking of the many conflicts haunting the Middle East, especially the terrible Syrian war, now in its fifth year. Yes, there is much we have to do, and there is much we have failed to achieve so far. But let me start with one thing that we have achieved, and that is the nuclear agreement with Iran. After more than 10 years of negotiation, that agreement has shown that diplomacy can overcome even the deepest rift if we give it a chance. It is crucial that we now use that momentum, that flicker of hope, to work towards a political solution in Syria as well.

Today's debate has revealed some significant differences, but it has also highlighted common interests. First and foremost, we must engage in a broad and meaningful political process before the final collapse of all the remaining State structures — which the devastated country of Syria will have to rebuild one day — and before the vicious ideology of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) can gain more ground amid the ruins of Syrian society. In order to find a starting point for that political process, we can build on decisions that have been unanimously adopted here in the Security Council, and in particular resolution 2139 (2014) of last year.

Today the Council must join forces to see that the resolution is implemented, including ensuring humanitarian access and banning barrel bombs. The standing channels of communication proposed by Foreign Minister Lavrov today should also be used in that effort, and I understood Secretary Kerry to have been hinting at the same direction when he offered de-confliction talks. Based on such cooperation, we must then explore together how best to pave the way for a peaceful and inclusive political transition in Syria. Building on extensive consultations, the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, Staffan de Mistura, has laid out a road map for the process that Germany wholeheartedly supports.

Germany does not want to see the Security Council divided on a matter of such importance. In the face of unspeakable human suffering, we in the United Nations all need to live up to our responsibility. I therefore urge the Council to ensure that we all support an initiative driven by the United Nations for a political transition in Syria.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Sameh Hassan Shokry Selim, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Arab Republic of Egypt.

Mr. Selim (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): The presence here today of Ministers for Foreign Affairs to participate at this meeting at the invitation of the Russian Federation to discuss the issue of the settlement of conflicts in the Middle East and North Africa and countering the terrorist threat in the region shows that the region requires unity from the international community in order to confront that threat. It also requires broader implementation and involvement by the Security Council in the crisis in the region.

I should like to express my gratitude to His Excellency Mr. Sergy Lavrov, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, for the invitation to be here.

We hope to be a member of the Security Council in the period 2016-2017, and therefore to be involved in confronting the threat of terrorism, which we have known well and which we have confronted for decades.

We are also interested in the settlement of regional conflicts before bloody conflicts affect State sovereignty, which can ultimately have an impact on the interests of all peoples. I believe the Russian spokesperson was right when she stated on 27 August that there was a need to comprehensively assess the nature of conflicts and to determine the necessary steps to restore national stability based on the principles of the United Nations.

We in Egypt share that vision. When Moscow affirms that regional crises can be effectively and truly resolved — and this meeting represents an important effort by the Security Council — we must act on a consensus basis in order to put an end to conflicts in the region. Such conflicts prevent the people of the region from moving towards modernity, with all that entails for international peace and security.

In making such laudalbe efforts, I believe that we should look again at the regional picture beginning in 2011. At that time some believed that the current politicizing of the region would have the support of the peoples. Some also thought that those trends were moderate and capable of containing and marginalizing the forces of extremism and terror that kill and destroy.

There is no doubt that those so-called Islamic trends ran counter to the ability to govern and they have shown that they have not understood the dynamics or the history of our peoples. They take over power and in an absolutist manner work against their own idea of patriotism. They act against the people and associate themselves with the most extreme forces.

The people then turned against them. Some thought that those currents would come to power in the region, and that did not take into account the diversity of circumstances in Arab countries. Egyptian society for its part, for example, refused to politicize religion and refused to hand over the country to a clique that tried to subject Egyptians. What can we say about the mosaic society in Syria that buttressed the crisis? To be frank, other factors were at play. We must understand that as well.

Therefore we must accept diversity in the Arab world. Our country has never wanted to politicize the region, as I was saying, especially when that is intended to subjugate the population. Syrian society is very diversified, and that has reinforced the crisis. To be frank, as we have tried to be, this conflict involved other factors, some of which were internal in nature, because some regimes in the region have lasted for decades without reviewing their policies or the nature of their relationship with their peoples and the regional scope. There has also been an expansion of corruption, opportunism and the marginalization of important sectors of society. At the same time, the people have become aware of their rights. This came together with revolution and with knowledge of social media, and it is only natural for those groups to express their ambitions and to decide to restore their rights. Given that regional situation, we can only call it a catastrophe. All factors need to be addressed together.

Occupation, calls for independence, decades-long repression and disregard of the necessary factors have given rise to an explosive crisis. To live in peace and stability in the Middle East is possible, but it requires that the Palestinian people regain their rights, their independent State and all the other rights enjoyed by citizens of other countries. That would do away with the polarization of extremist forces.

Whereas in Syria several wars — against terrorism, the fight against the regime and the fight against the moderate opposition — have merged into one, the latter is in conflict with the regime and is waging a reciprocal war. The multiplicity of wars is an element that further attracts terrorists and extremists to Syrian soil and further complicates efforts at a settlement.

What makes it possible to fight terrorism effectively is to simplify those conflicts so that there is only one war between two fronts, one under the flag of the State and the other one which unites the forces of extremism and terror. Then one can give full support to the first front made up of the international community and the people and then we can create a front together with the Syrian State through the transition committee embodied in the Geneva decision. That will allow everyone to join that effort.

The same situation applies to Iraq. Prime Minister Al-Abadi tries to build a united front vis-à-vis terrorism; but things are not easy in any of the conflicts of the region because of the confessional polarization that has existed since the war in Iraq in 2003 and the assassination of the LebanesePrime Minister, Rafik Hariri in 2005. In Beirut in 2008 all of this was followed by four years of conflict, and even the imposition of a process in Yemen.

All this makes it necessary to return to the rule of law and a situation that guarantees rights to all citizens without exception. That is the only way out to ensure a certain modicum of stability in the region.

We must not allow conflicts to become broader between the Shiite and the Sunni communities, which are both noble. We cannot politicize religion and use it as a weapon. The situation in Libya, despite the differences in nature and the absence of the religious factor in the conflict, requires creating the same broader front to face terrorism. That is what the United Nations Mission attempts, but that requires international resolve.

The invitation by Russia to this meeting is a foundation on the basis of which we can build in order to involve the Council in all the factors in the region to ensure a good outcome. I hope that we all take the opportunity of this window in order to become partners to fight Daesh and to establish stability in the Middle East and safeguard the State.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Federica Mogherini, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy.

Ms. Mogherini: I thank you, Mr. President, for bringing this discussion within the United Nations framework. That is a step the European Union appreciates.

It is time for the international community and for all of us to take a step forward. It is time, we believe, to leave behind the divisions of the past. Today we are here to discuss two top priorities for all of us: the political solution of conflicts in the Middle East and North Africa and the fight against terrorist groups such as Daesh and Al-Qaida's affiliates.

For too long these two priorities were perceived as conflicting goals. For too long we discussed whether to prioritize the political processes or the fight against Daesh and terrorism. These divisions over the years have weakened our action on both tracks. They weaken the international community. I believe we can now finally be ready to move on. I believe we are now finally ready to realize that these two goals can only go hand in hand and that they are, and have to be, our real focus while we mobilize at the same time all the humanitarian support needed to respond to the urgent needs of the symptoms of this crisis, starting from the humanitarian situation of the huge number of refugees that are hosted in the region and in Europe.

The two top priorities are fighting terrorism and finding political solutions to the main crisis — starting from the two key ones, the one in Libya and the one in Syria. It is absolutely necessary to address the military dimension of the threats posed by Daesh and Al-Qaida. The European Union in itself is not directly involved in the anti-Daesh military campaign. But, as members know, a number of our member States are; and the European Union itself as such is concretely working on some complementary dimensions of this collective effort, in full cooperation with our regional and international partners.

That means, for instance cutting off the supply lines of terrorist groups. We have provided more than 1,300 intelligence leads on foreign fighters and other terrorists in Syria and Iraq. We are assisting our partners on criminal justice issues and in improving their capacity to investigate and prosecute foreign fighters. We are supporting the different security agencies in Iraq to better share information and coordinate their efforts.

We are working on another crucial element, namely, stabilizing liberated areas. That also means building a future for the territories liberated from Daesh. The European Union has launched the first concrete action to remove mines and improvised explosive devices in the Iraqi regions freed from Daesh. Together with the United Nations Mine Action Service, the European Union is coordinating the work on booby traps.

Our action is aimed at helping people return to their homes once their homes are safe and at starting to rebuild their communities and countries. The European Union is engaged in very concrete terms on the ground, but we all know very well that, in this aspect of the fight, military power will not be enough to defeat Daesh. Military might alone will not solve the crisis, either in Syria or elsewhere. In Syria it is urgent to start the process leading to a peaceful, inclusive political transition.

International and regional Powers must take on their responsibility in that respect. Different regional and international actors have substantial influence on the Syrian parties. It is time now to bring them all to the table for serious, substantial negotiations inside the United Nations-led framework.

Let us focus on the way forward. Let us be united and concrete. If we, the international community, cannot manage to do it, and to do it in a united way, how can we think we can unite the region and the actors in Syria on a common agenda that can defeat Daesh and bring peace and democracy to the country? That is the question. That is why the European Union supports the Secretary-General's Special Envoy. We are working together with Mr. Staffan de Mistura and his team in a very active way to start the process start and advance with strength and a sense of urgency. We actively support his work and actively support his proposal on the working groups and on a contact group on Syria.

All regional and international Powers should put their rivalries aside and find ways to cooperate on a common agenda built on a collective interest in security, peace and democracy. Only in a more cooperative regional environment can we hope to build peace in Syria and defeat Daesh. That is true for reconciliation processes not only in Syria but throughout the Middle East and North Africa.

In Iraq and in Libya we need a Government of national accord to start not within weeks but within days to stop the internal divisions, to fight Daesh and to begin rebuilding the country. Daesh has nothing to do with the history of Libya. It built its strengths on the civil war and the divisions among factions and militias. Unity among Libya's actors and factions is the most effective and the only weapon against Daesh. Daesh needs to ally with local militias to keep control of the ground. Where it does not manage to find allies, Daesh is easier to eradicate. It is politics that holds the key to its defeat.

Conflicts only strengthen terrorist groups. That is what war does. Conflicts are powerful and probably the most powerful source of radicalization. Think of the conflict between the Israelis and the Palestinians, including the most recent flare-ups. That is why the European Union believes that relaunching the Middle East peace process and achieving results both for the Israelis and the Palestinian people could send a very powerful message of reconciliation to the whole region and far beyond that, to the world.

For those reasons, we have decided to work together with our partners in the Quartet to hold a principals' meeting here today in New York and to invite Jordan, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the League of Arab States to work together in a regional framework. The whole region has an interest in this, and leverage to put an end — hopefully a happy one — to this conflict.

The key is political will and unity among the regional international players. But we know that the current crisis is not only political, it is also cultural. Over past years and decades too many forces have bet on the rise of sectarianism, with the disastrous results that we all see. That trend must be reversed. We need to help communities stick together, and not tear them apart. We need inclusive societies and democratic political processes. All communities and minorities must be granted security, freedom and the right to contribute to their country's public life, if we want resilient and strong societies across the region.

Only democracy and inclusiveness bring about stability, and they are the most powerful weapons against terror. Too many times we are faced with a narrative opposing democracy and security. That is a false dilemma. We know that very well in Europe. A society can be stable and safe only when it is fully democratic.

The region and the world need a new order, and this crisis might be an opportunity. There might be differences among us. There have also been differences around this table this morning. But as Foreign Minister Steinmeir mentioned just a few interventions ago, there are also many things on which we can unite. We have differences also on how a new order in the region and in the world should look, but I believe there is something on which we can all agree. The only alternative to a new world order, and a new regional order, is chaos. That is the enemy we are fighting today — perennial conflict, constant instability, global disorder — our common enemy is chaos. At this seventieth anniversary of the foundation of the United Nations let us join forces, as we did successfully in the Iranian deal negotiations. Let us all choose cooperation over conflict. Finally, let us build a cooperative world order. Europe is ready.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Ivica Dačić, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia.

Mr. Dačić (Serbia): I am honoured to participate in today's meeting of the Security Council convened to discuss the maintenance of international peace and security, and specifically the settlement of conflicts in the Middle East and North Africa and the struggle against terrorism in the region. The importance of this meeting is amplified by the consideration of some of the most challenging issues of the present-day world that are closely connected with the migrant wave that we are currently facing.

I take this opportunity to extend my gratitude to the Russian Federation, and Foreign Minister Lavrov in particular, for organizing this important meeting, the holding of which highlights the need for the continued attention and commitment by United Nations States Members to questions of regional and global security in a world of increasing global interdependence.

The current situation in the Middle East and North Africa makes it incumbent upon us to intensify our common efforts to solve this crisis and bring about long-term stabilization in the region. For some time now, the region of the Middle East and North Africa has been the epicentre of instability, characterized by political, social, economic, inter-ethnic and ideological tensions. Many of its countries are increasingly becoming breeding grounds for terrorist groups that practice violent extremism. Evidently, these developments present a challenge not only for the region but also for the entire international community, both with respect to peace and weapons proliferation and in the humanitarian field. The lack of serious dialogue, based on genuine readiness to compromise, serves only to exacerbate and radicalize the situation, increase tensions and intensify extremisms of each and every stripe.

Serbia is firmly committed to addressing present-day security challenges. Aware of the complexity and interrelatedness of internal crises and their effect on and potential to spawn terrorism, we have coordinated our efforts internationally in an effort to find a comprehensive response. We have friends of many decades in the Middle East and North Africa — no small reason for our determination to make a constructive contribution alongside our partners the world over to the suppression of terrorist threats and all types of extremism and to dialogue aimed at finding political, sustainable solutions for the current crises in the Middle East and North Africa. We strongly support concerted actions to be taken through the institutions of the United Nations system, the indisputable world leader in this regard.

We are all experiencing the consequences of these crises. The migrant wave from the conflict-ridden areas flooding many European countries has not by-passed my country either, which has found itself in the path of the wave. The migrant crisis bursting through and over the political, cultural and administrative borders of States speaks tellingly of the interrelatedness of faraway countries and peoples and highlights the consequent need for a responsible and energetic approach to the quest for a lasting and comprehensive solution to this burning issue. Partial and limited local steps are not a solution; cooperation and coordination of our efforts internationally and stabilization of crisis areas, the Middle East and North Africa in particular, are.

Independent of the new wave, Serbia has been home to 44,000 refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia for two decades now, as well as to 204,000 internally displaced persons from Kosovo and Metohija. Yet it has demonstrated its readiness to address the situation, within its powers and possibilities, and do responsibly what it should and could do every step of the way. We have received recognition and acclaim from throughout the world for the manner in which we treated these men and women. However, Serbia cannot bear the burden all by itself. We are short of capacities and accommodation, human and financial. Since the beginning of the year more than 170,000 registered migrants have entered Serbia, and somewhat more than 500 have submitted requests for asylum.

I agree with those who qualify these developments as yet another mass migration of peoples. They leave States weakened by protracted political instability, conflicts, bad economies and activities of terrorist groups. There are evidently systemic problems that cause people to leave their homes in these numbers and in this way. In the process of solving these problems, the support of all of us, the Member States of the most important multilateral global Organization, is of paramount importance.

We ought to use our meeting today to exchange views and define the next steps in our efforts to render full support to the stabilization of the conditions in the region in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and the principles of international law. Also, this meeting provides yet another opportunity for all of us to underscore our commitment to helping the countries of the region find ways and means to respond to the current security and other challenges and arrive at a solution jointly and by building mutual confidence. In that context, it is clear that we need concerted international efforts, especially efforts aimed at encouraging dialogue and solving political and security crises. Without the dialogue and the support of the international community, we cannot expect to find a proper answer to the deepening and complex crisis that we are being faced with.

Stepping up activities to promote the culture of peace, mutual understanding and confidence in the region must be done alongside the efforts to encourage readiness to concessions and compromise. By its own example, my country has demonstrated very clearly what results can be achieved with hard work and dedication to strengthening regional confidence and tolerance. We are ready to make a contribution in that regard on a broader international plan.

Peace cannot be achieved by force. For it we need mutual understanding and agreements. Talk alone, though, will not suffice; belief and joint work will.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Mohammad Javad Zarif, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Zarif (Islamic Republic of Iran): In our globalized world, in which threats recognize no borders, violent extremism continues to spread and to implicate regions near and far. A tidal wave of refugees and migrants in Europe and tens of thousands of terrorist foreign fighters moving between the region's hot spots and their own societies are indicative of the rapid deglobalizing nature of this crisis. It is alarming that, according to a recent estimate, the trend of foreign terrorist fighters travelling mostly to Iraq and Syria is still upward. It indicates that international efforts to curb the flow have been far from sufficient.

No member of the international community can feel safe from the fallout of the crisis in our region. As the threat is global, thwarting it too requires a serious, well-thought-out and coordinated global effort. Success requires a new mindset, away from the old paradigm of exclusion governed by a zero-sum mentality that has only produced negative-sum outcomes.

Mindful of the need to address the threat globally, my President in his address to the General Assembly (see A/70/PV.13) reiterated his call for a united front against violent extremism and proposed to draft a comprehensive plan of action on how to proceed. That is imperative, especially in view of the persistence of the threat, the appalling humanitarian consequences and the fact that the present international coalition is failing to achieve its goals.

The plan of action should translate the broad international consensus on the need to uproot violent extremism into targeted and effective actions, which have so far proved elusive. Based on the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, and while providing for a readjustment in mindsets and a new paradigm, the plan of action should aim to support a cultural and ideological front against extreme ideologies, address such contributing factors as dictatorship, poverty, corruption and discrimination, counter Islamophobia and engage all regional States and international actors to deny extremists access to funds, recruits and free movement across borders. It should also address the continued occupation of Palestine and the Israeli atrocities against the Palestinian people over so many decades, which have fuelled extremism and other crises in the region and beyond.

Let me conclude by stressing that we in Iran are fully aware that extremism, terrorism, Takfiri mentality and sectarianism are common challenges that threaten all of us in the region and beyond and require our collective response. We regret that one or two of our neighbours have failed to recognize the threat and our common destiny and exhibit irresponsibility, manifested in their regional posture and, most recently, in the treatment of the victims of the recent disaster in Mecca. The world has not yet forgotten their complicity in the creation of Al-Qaida and the Taliban and in Saddam Hussein's crimes against my people and his own. Those were the major contributing factors in the dangerous emergence of Takfiri extremism.

But Iranians are prudent enough to recognize that we should not live in the past and must engage in serious dialogue and regional cooperation, because we truly believe that the security of our neighbours is our own security. We certainly hope that the one or two left-outs in our neighbourhood will embrace this reality and respond positively to the call for responsible action, dialogue and regional cooperation.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Feridun Sinirlioğlu, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey.

Mr. Sinirlioğlu (Turkey): For centuries, the peoples of the Middle East and North Africa lived together in peace and harmony regardless of race, religion, language, sect or ethnicity. They did so and flourished politically, economically, socially and intellectually — always with a sense of shared destiny and all the while embracing their differences as a perpetual source of wealth, and not weakness.

Today's reality differs dramatically from that history, and the region is confronted with many complex challenges. Sectarian and divisive policies, brutal oppression of legitimate demands for democracy and unresolved conflicts resulting in mass displacements, coupled with feelings of resentment due to growing discrimination and xenophobia in other parts of the world, have combined to create a breeding ground for violent extremism and terrorism.

We should be clear on two points. First, terrorism and extremism are not a Middle Eastern/North African phenomenon. Terrorism cannot and should not be associated with any religion, nationality, ethnic group or geographic region. Secondly, no region in the world is immune from violence today. Terrorism is a global and transnational phenomenon that needs to be addressed through effective bilateral and multilateral cooperation.

Terrorist groups such as Daesh cannot be defeated without addressing the root causes that created it. Daesh is an overriding national security threat for Turkey, together with other terrorist organizations like the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) and Revolutionary People's Liberation Party-Front (DHKP-C), which operate in the same environment. Since its creation, while many other partners struggle to understand the threat, Turkish authorities spared no effort to counter Daesh. Currently, we have been carrying out joint air operations against terrorist targets as part of the international coalition that brings together more than 60 countries.

While fighting Daesh, we should harbour no illusions about the conditions that led to its rise. Daesh did not suddenly spontaneously appear out of nowhere and spread like a cancer on its own. It was aided and abetted by the politically defunct totalitarian Al-Assad regime, which, in its desperate drive to retain power at all costs, has deployed any means available to it, including chemical weapons and barrel bombs, to kill, maim, oppress and otherwise terrorize its own people into submission.

The suppression of the democratic aspirations of the Syrian people, divisive sectarian policies and the war crimes and massive violations of human rights that have been committed with impunity by the Al-Assad regime have combined to create fertile ground for radicalization, extremism and the recruitment of foreign terrorist fighters by Daesh. In fact, it was the tactical cooperation and operational air support by the terrorist Al-Assad regime and its sectarian collaborators that enabled Daesh's rapid expansion in Syria.

The reprehensible methods and actions of Daesh should not confuse us about what we should prioritize as we move forward. The international community and the Security Council need to address the root cause of the problem in Syria through resolute action. Here are the main parameters of a comprehensive strategy for a way forward.

First, we must do all we can to downgrade and defeat terrorist organizations like Daesh, the PKK, the DHKP-C and their kind. There can be no room for moral relativism in the fight against terror.

Secondly, we need to create safe areas in Syria that have been cleared from Daesh, where protection will also be provided to the civilian population against attacks from the air. Such zones, if implemented with determination, can keep Syrians in Syria, lead to the voluntary return of refugees and encourage people to believe again in a stable future for their country.

Thirdly, we should all work for a solution to the conflict that meets the legitimate demands and aspirations of the Syrian people and ensures a managed and orderly transition to real political change. The political process we should vitalize would lead to a united, democratic, secular, non-sectarian, multicultural Syria without Al-Assad. An outcome based on those principles will be the best guarantee to reverse the tide of extremism and eradicate once and for all the terrorist threat that Syria has become home to.

In Iraq, the Government needs to be supported with the challenges it faces, and the Iraqi Government must effectively embrace all segments of society. In Libya, national reconciliation and the formation of a national unity government would be the most effective response to terrorism and all other scourges.

We cannot ignore the plight of the Palestinians who are living under occupation. We need to keep in mind that the historical injustice perpetrated against the Palestinian people is fueling hatred, alienation and radicalism across the region. It is time for a resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict based on the two-State vision, without further delay.

Despite all challenges, we are confident that the proud peoples of the Middle East and North Africa will succeed in their efforts to revitalize their deep-rooted culture of tolerance and peaceful coexistence.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Gebran Bassil, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Emigrants of the Lebanese Republic.

Mr. Bassil (Lebanon): I thank the Russian Federation for convening this meeting.

Lebanon believes that the fight against terrorism is an international one, considering that terrorism is an international menace to peace and security. Eradicating terrorism from the Middle East and North Africa is a prerequisite for stopping its rapid expansion through the world. The fight against terrorism in the Middle East and North Africa cannot be won without the countries of the region.

Lebanon has fully engaged in the fight to drag our country and people away from radicalism and fundamentalism. We have mobilized our troops and our boots are on the ground. We have resorted to our values of openness and tolerance to counter the message of hatred and inhumanity. We have supported actions aimed at defeating the ideological and financial sponsors of these organizations. Lebanon is at the forefront of this battle.

Daesh and Al-Nusra have been holding hostages — 26 members of our armed forces — since August 2014. Our troops have been engaged in daily fights on our eastern borders, and our intelligence services are tracking dormant and active cells inside the country. Our strategy against terrorism is to engaged in the fight for the promotion of our values and our message. We are fighting to preserve the existence of our people since the spread of terror, combined with a mass influx of forcefully displaced persons, represents an existential threat. We are fighting to protects the rights of minorities. Diversity in the Middle East is at the foundation of the region's identity. It is also a source of inspiration for other countries and nations all over the world.

The system of collective security set up in the aftermath of the Second World War has failed to protect us. Do we need to search for a protection system every 100 years, or do we develop our own self-protection system through our scale of values and our ability to live together, while preserving our rights and roles. We have opted for the second. We are fighting to safeguard our collective values and to demonstrate that obscurantism cannot prevail over humanism. We are fighting because we are convinced that the fall of Lebanon, as the last bastion of diversity in the Middle East, would inevitably lead to the uncontrolled spread of terror to neighbouring Europe and, further, to the rest of the world.

We are fighting to reverse the current trend that is emptying the Middle East of its essential social components. We believe that this phenomenon is leading to irreversible changes that will affect all of us. If the Middle East were to sink into perpetrual violence between sectarian, closed entities, we cannot imagine the world living peacefully. What would the world look like if the message of Lebanon were to disappear?

We will keep on fighting, but we will not be able to sustain the fight if we are left on our own — or rather, betrayed. We will not be able to keep up the pace of our struggle if the international community keeps on with its policy of double standards, especially when it comes to the Arab-Israeli conflict. We will not be able to win if the major policy-movers remain shortsighted to the implications of the spread of terror.

Combat was not our choice; it was imposed on us. We believe in dialogue and we see in peaceful engagement and in bridge-building the best answer to violence. We believe in political dialogue and we have faith in diplomatic means to resolve conflicts. The examples of the nuclear deal and the Cuban crisis are a confirmation that confrontation is not an option, since it will lead only to the victory of terrorism. We call for political solutions. A forceful approach will not work. A forced solution will not last. An induced political solution will not flourish.

Only a solution from within — from the people — will succeed and put us all at our ease. That can be achieved only if we resort to democracy, offering first to the people the freedom to choose their leaders and their regimes and, secondly, respecting the choices they make. The success of the fight against terror needs the conjunction of two legitimacies. One is the moral legitimacy of values, which we take for granted; the other is the political legitimacy of regimes, and their additional efforts are needed.

The clock is ticking and violence is spilling over. Refugees are spilling over. This cannot be contained geographically; it is an ideology that we contain and counter through the antidote models like Lebanon. It is the fragile balance between the peoples of the Middle East that is at stake. It is peace in the world that is threatened.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Paolo Gentiloni, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Italian Republic.

Mr. Gentiloni (Italy): One year ago, the advent of the extremist, sectarian and brutal entity Daesh brought the terrorist threat to new, unprecedented levels in the Middle East and North Africa. To counter the rapid expansion of that organization, Italy assured its resolute and concrete support to the international coalition against Daesh, providing humanitarian assistance, making a qualified contribution to military activities, and supporting the stabilization efforts. To date, some important results have been achieved, showing the effectiveness of a vast, collective action. Nevertheless, more effort is still required.

Concerning the great tragedy taking place in Syria, we cannot but reiterate that the ever-increasing violence on the ground is causing immense suffering for the civilian population. Despite some sporadic and very limited ceasefires, our assessment is that the conflict is bound to continue unless we help the Syrians find a lasting and inclusive political solution to the conflict.

We believe that the international community should step up its support for the endeavour of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria, Mr. Staff de Mistura, to broker a credible and viable transition, in line with the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/523, annex). We encourage regional players, especially those who have a greater influence on the Syrian parties, to increase their efforts to facilitate a political settlement. A Syria without a clear way forward is in nobody's interest.

Concerning Iraq, major challenges remain before us. We need to uphold, in an effective and sustainable way, the reform process undertaken by Prime Minister Al Abadi aimed at increasing inclusivity and promoting reconciliation. As we move to clear the Daesh presence from progressively larger areas, we must ensure that they will be effectively held and not subject to a Daesh attempt at renewed conquest. In that regard, Italy is expanding its efforts to train Iraqi police, whose role will prove critical to stabilize liberated areas and allow displaced persons to return to their homes safely and without fear of retribution.

We also need to carefully monitor and prevent any further expansion of Daesh throughout the region, most notably in Libya, where internal divisions and infighting are creating the space for that group to prosper. The Libyan crisis poses a major challenge to the stability of a vast region that spans from the Middle East, to sub-Saharan Africa and to Europe itself. Without a political settlement, none of the problems in Libya will ever find a durable solution. That is why Libya urgently needs a decision from Libyans to choose a Government of national accord that is able to undertake a critical stabilization process, curb human trafficking and take the lead in fighting terrorism.

Lebanon is another country of the region that is increasingly affected by instability. The ramifications of the Syrian crisis in Lebanon risk worsening the prolonged political crisis.

While we remain steadfast in our fight against Daesh and all terrorist organizations in North Africa and in the Middle East, we should continue to advocate dialogue and reconciliation as key ingredients for a peaceful future in the region. In that regard, broader global cooperation could strengthen our fight against terrorism. Italy considers the Russian Federation's draft resolution a potential step in the right direction. We need a common and unifying goal, as well as to concentrate our efforts against Daesh and to support political change through a transition in Syria.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Mohamed El Hadi Dayri, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Libya.

Mr. Dayri (Libya) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to begin, Sir, by extending my congratulations on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month. We also thank you for choosing this important issue for today's debate.

I would like to emphasize the position of the legitimate authorities of Libya with regard to our commitment to a national dialogue as sponsored by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General to agree on the formation of a Government of national accord, whose priorities will include restoring peace and stability and combating terrorism. Along with the people of Libya, the legitimate authorities seek further support to combat terrorism alongside pursuing the political track in the Libyan crisis.

I wish to reiterate what I said here in the Chamber on 19 December 2014 (see S/PV.7351) during the special meeting convened by the Chadian presidency on the issue of terrorism.

First, there is a need to conclude a comprehensive strategy against Daesh. All morning we have heard about the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and other terrorist organizations in those countries. I also heard a reference to ISIS in Libya, without specific mention of what is to be done in Libya. Everyone agrees on the need to form a Government of national accord, and we are committed to that as a national priority and, as I just said, as being crucial to face the numerous challenges we are confronting in Libya today. However, that is not enough. We in fact want a comprehensive strategy against ISIS, not just in Syria and Iraq but in Libya, Tunisia and other places in the region plagued by terrorism. Since October, when a group announced its affiliation in ISIS in Derna, eastern Libya, ISIS has been expanding and receiving the support of hundreds of terrorist fighters flooding into that city and into Benghazi and Sirte. As I said last December, I reiterate today that ISIS is expanding and that there has been no effective action to support the army and the people of Libya in facing up to terrorism.

Secondly, we condemn the heinous crimes — respectively, in February and April — that targeted our 21 brothers from Egypt and our 28 brothers from Ethiopia. However, I want to emphasize that 40 Libyans were also killed as a result of terrorist acts in the eastern part of our country on 20 February. That is in addition to the beheading of 12 Libyan citizens and the burning of a Salafist cleric after exhuming his remains from the grave where he was buried 12 days earlier. That took place on Friday, 14 August. Before that and since, scores of innocent Libyans have been killed by ISIS in Derna, Benghazi and Tripoli.

Yet there are no resources for the Libyan army to fend off the increasing threats to our country and our people. I would like to emphasize that we are grateful to the Council for its adoption of resolution

2214 (2015), on 27 March. However, we have seen no active implementation of the resolution thus far — not just in terms of removing restrictions on the supply of weapons to the Libyan army, but also with regard to building up the capacity of the army and supporting the ability of the Government to implement paragraphs 7 and 10 of the resolution.

Thirdly, also last December, given the failure of the international community to act, I said that we feared ISIS would expand further in Libya and that it could have a similar presence as it has in Syria and Iraq.

Fourthly, the concerns of our African brothers and our partners and friends in Europe are legitimate. We share the concerns of our Arab and African friends about the expansion of terrorism in Libya and its negative repercussions on their countries' domestic situations. That includes our European partners, who aim to combat human traffickers who are sending thousands Africans and Arabs to their deaths in the Mediterranean Sea. We, too, would like to eradicate this scourge, which is a gross violation of human rights. As Libyans, Africans, Arabs and Europeans, it is incumbent upon us to combat infiltration into Libya by the many groups of terrorists. Again, as I have said, that requires a multipronged strategy and plan of action in which all our partners participate.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Nabil Elaraby, Secretary-General of the League of Arab States.

Mr. Elaraby (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for inviting the League of Arab States to present its views on the current situation in the Middle East.

The Security Council is the organ primarily responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security. It is regrettable that the Council has not upheld its responsibilities in the Arab world. Terrorism continues to threaten the countries of the region. We must definitively eradicate terrorism at its roots.

I have heard more than a few speakers today mention the eradication of terrorism. But we must not forget that there is another type of terrorism: State terrorism, as practiced by the State of Israel. Palestine has been occupied since 1967. I myself was in the Security Council during the unanimous adoption of resolution 242 (1967), and also for the adoption of resolution 338 (1973), which established the urgency of implementing the earlier resolution. Resolution 338 (1973) was drafted in Moscow during a visit by the representative of the United States to that city.

The two resolutions called for the withdrawal of Israel from the occupied territories. Israel withdrew from Egypt and Jordan, and partially withdrew from Syria within the framework of another agreement. But Israel did not withdraw from Palestine and some Lebanese and Syrian territories. Israel continues to stall for time in order to avoid compliance with those resolutions. Israel has tried to further appropriate Palestinian territory through actions considered illegal by the Council and the International Court of Justice.

The questions that we now ask are the following: Where does the Security Council stand and why does it not act? On our television screens, we see the attacks committed by Israel against Muslim and Christian holy sites and the Al-Aqsa Mosque. Israel's actions pose a challenge not only for Arab countries, but also to the principles, the pillars, of the international community. The Security Council must immediately take measures to ensure the effective implementation of those resolutions and the establishment of a Palestinian State with Jerusalem as its capital.

With regard to Syria, a murderous conflict is taking place that has produced countless victims and has caused untold destruction. That is the gravest humanitarian crisis of the century, and I wonder, once again, what has the Security Council done? In its capacity as a regional organization that cooperates with the United Nations under Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations, the League of Arab States seized the Organization of this matter in 2012. But our call was not heeded by the Security Council. We again call on the Security Council to fully support the implementation of the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex) in order to ensure peace and stability in Syria. We must fully support the efforts of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria, Mr. Staffan de Mistura, as well as those of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of Mission in Lybia, Mr. Bernardino León, aimed at ensuring stability in Libya under international law.

Those situations threaten the integrity of other countries and international peace and security in the Middle East, as well as throughout the rest of the world. The current predicament is rooted in the fact that States have not complied with the text of agreements and with international law. Terrorism, in turn, gains from the absence of solutions to the conflict.

In conclusion, I would ask once again whether the Security Council has made adequate use of its prerogatives aimed at protecting and saving people from the scourge of war. That applies to all countries. Permit me to say that one of the main reasons for the current state of affairs is the exercise of the right of the veto. The Council started its work in 1946 and maintains the same provisional rules of procedure to this day. We do not have a permanent standing set of rules of procedure. The international community needs to face the challenges of the twenty-first century. We must strengthen the Security Council so that it can shoulder its responsibilities with regard to international peace and security.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Khalid Bin Mohamed Al-Attiyah, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the State of Qatar.

Mr. Al-Attiyah (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): We were distraught today to find out that the bombing campaign in the countryside of Homs and Hama — including the village of Restan — resulted in 40 deaths and 276 wounded, most of whom were women and children, according to preliminary reports. In that connection, we remain concerned and condemn that unjustified bombing, and we call upon States involved militarily to be on the side of the people of Syria, who are pitted against a regime turned criminal. In its criminal actions, the regime has gone beyond the atrocities committed by the terrorist groups in Syria.

The United Nations efforts to maintain peace and security in the world are now of the utmost importance. While they have resulted in success in some instances, it is regrettable that, in some regions, the peace and security operations of the United Nations have either arrived too late or have been ineffectual. It is also unfortunate that every time the suffering of the people caused by the conflict increases, so does the impotence of the United Nations. If we look into the problems of peace and security in the Middle East and in the world, we must admit that there are many weaknesses and vulnerabilities within institutional legal systems, and especially within the Security Council. If we look at our failures in the Middle East — in Palestine or in Syria, for example — we find that we are entirely powerless, given the gap between the magnitude of the violations committed and the weak stance taken by the international community. Double standards have engendered a growing frustration and feelings of doubt regarding the international community's sense of justice, which leads us back to reiterate the importance of reforming the United Nations, starting with the Security Council.

The Arab-Israeli conflict has gone on for too long. It has also affected peace and security in the world. It has had an extremely negative impact on the region and the entire world. The tragic consequences of the conflict will continue as long as a comprehensive and just resolution is not found. We are quite familiar with the obstacles, which come from the side of Israel. Clearly, a just solution can be found if we defer to the resolutions pertaining to the formation of a Palestinian State within the 1967 borders, with the Holy City of Jerusalem as its capital and in line with the two-State solution, which has received the blessing of the international community.

The inability of the Security Council to establish a just and lasting peace in the Middle East, especially in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, represents a threat to the principles of the peaceful resolution of conflicts. It also gives extremists pretexts to mobilize, as they take advantage of injustice and conflict. The Security Council therefore must focus more closely on the Palestinian question, as it has on other conflicts in the region, by taking the measures necessary to relaunch the political process in order to achieve peace and security and put an end to the occupation.

It is no longer acceptable, no matter what pretext is invoked, not to help the people of Syria and help them emerge from their suffering, in a situation that has gone out of control. All red lines have been crossed, without any moral or principled inhibitions or consideration for humanitarian or international law. The impotence of the international community in the face of the war crimes and genocide committed by the regime and the humanitarian crimes committed in Syria show that the international system has crumbled and highlight the absence of an international conscience. That compromises the collective security system.

We can also ask, how can we shoulder our collective responsibility to the people of Syria, who, in an inhuman spectacle, are being subjected to all forms of persecution and massacres? Faced with this painful situation, the international community must take all dissuasive measures possible in order to put an end to this tragedy, which has lasted for far too long. The time has come for the world to say "enough" to the Syrian regime.

The phenomenon of terrorism poses a threat to peace and security in many regions of the world. We all are aware of the root causes of this phenomenon, which include religious exclusion, social marginalization, injustice, lack of development, absolutism, the crumbling of the international security system and the lack of effective methods for resolving conflicts peacefully. We must combat all of the causes of this phenomenon. We need policies that will put an end to all manifestations of terrorism by drawing a clear distinction between terrorism and peoples and their right to resist and put an end to occupation.

Dealing with the dangerous aftermath in Iraq, including the proliferation of terrorist acts, requires the participation of all segments of the Iraqi population. The most effective way to meet these challenges is to launch a comprehensive national dialogue leading to reconciliation among all of the different groups in Iraq; that would also strike a blow against terrorism. That will be possible only if there is security and stability in Iraqi society.

In Libya, since the outbreak of the crisis, we have stressed that it is crucial to start a comprehensive dialogue that would create a national unity Government that would restore peace and stability, one that would have international assistance in facing terrorism. We commend the role of the United Nations, represented by the Special Envoy, who has been quite efficient in his efforts towards reconciliation. Let us hope that those efforts will be successful and will re-establish stability.

The revolt of various factions against the legitimate regime in Yemen and their domination of legitimate State institutions have led to an environment conducive to terrorism. That has led in turn to a regional and international response based on United Nations resolutions and international law. The only way of putting an end to the conflict in Yemen is to help the legitimate Government; the initiative of the Gulf States is the result of the National Dialogue Conference and is fully in line with resolution 2216 (2015).

I wish the Council every success in this meeting.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Vesna Pusić, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign and European Affairs of Croatia.

Ms. Pusić (Croatia): We are currently confronted with unprecedented challenges in the Middle East and North Africa that are having immense, rippling effects on the wider region, the broader neighbourhood, of which Croatia is definitely a part, and on other parts of the world.

Unresolved conflicts, poverty, water and food insecurity, all sorts of discrimination, terrorism, violence, human rights violations, the transformation of war into a war exclusively against the civilian population, and the elevation of sexual violence to the level of the weapon of choice in these conflicts all demonstrate that this type of war has become less about territory or even natural resources and more about the destruction of peoples. Weak and non-functioning institutions definitely contribute to that, lawlessness contributes to that; all of this contributes to the increasing number of conflicts and to making people leave their homes in search of safety and peace, most of them running for their lives. Such challenges require an exceptional, coordinated and comprehensive response as well as strong leadership and genuine partnership. We urgently need to stand together and act with resolve. This is in the interest of us all, as we see it.

We believe that in our approach we should address this problem at three levels. The first is the immediate priority: the stopping of violence. The second is bringing peace, and I emphasize here the difference between stopping the violence and creating peace; they are two different though related processes and sometimes require different partners. The third is a sustainable and long-term solution, in other words, a functioning, safe State.

Only by addressing the root causes and facilitating political solutions can we create prospects that will stand the test of time. To achieve this, we need a genuine political commitment on all sides; otherwise, even the best- designed approach will fail. In this regard, we see the importance of a United Nations-led process to negotiate political settlements and find sustainable solutions for peace and stability in the region.

Our action should have a strong regional and country-specific dimension and outreach that brings on board all international and regional players. It should be an approach that includes intensified diplomatic engagement in finding political solutions while at the same time comprehensively employing other mechanisms to improve conditions on the ground: sustainable development, humanitarian and stabilization support, counter-terrorism, peacebuilding and confidence-building measures, and so on.

The current refugee crisis that has engulfed the Middle East has spilled over into Europe. It is a test of humanity and solidarity for us in Europe, especially for us in the immediate neighbourhood. Close to 90,000 people have crossed Croatia's border in the past two weeks.

It is difficult, but if we have a clear objective in mind — a clear second and third step — as to what can be done and how to approach or address the problem, we can deal with it. But if our thinking remains entirely open-ended, if we do not know what we are doing and we are just lying low and letting waves of people wash over us, it is going to be destructive for a much broader set of countries than the countries of the Middle East. Recognizing and dealing with the refugee crisis is also, in our view, a serious wake-up call for all of us who have seen people come to our doorstep, a wake-up call to all of us that our first reaction should be a humane one — we need to treat these people as people — and the second step needs to involve talking to all partners. The third step needs to involve using this coming winter to find a way to stop the fighting in Syria and Iraq, but especially in Syria.

With regard to Syria, I would like to emphasis again the fact that we see, from our experience in that respect, the termination of the fighting as a connected but separate process from the actual bringing about of peace, which takes years or decades. Stopping the fighting is not peace yet, but it is a prerequisite for peace. It is a prerequisite for starting to build and embark on the long-term process called peacebuilding, which ends in real peace.

We believe that, in order to stop the fighting, we might need a different or broader group of partners than the one needed to build peace. In Syria, in order to stop the fighting, we need everybody who is prepared to participate in the effort to stop the fighting to be on board. In order to build peace, we probably need a different group of actors, but that will come later. In my view, Staffan de Mistura has been doing an excellent job in showing the way and the need to replace fighting with talking. Sometimes that actually works. At the end of all of the fighting there is talking, so it is probably better to start sooner rather than later.

We also believe that time is of the essence in that context. Winter is coming. Now is the time when we should find a common solution for stopping the fighting in Syria. If we do not do that, spring will bring new surprises and new suffering for the people of the region, as well as the danger of an expansion of the crisis into a much broader regional neighbourhood than the one we are looking at now.

On Libya, we believe that we need to continue to support the United Nations-led inclusive political process headed by Bernardino León aimed at reaching an agreement on establishing a Government of national unity. A bad Government is a bad thing. The only thing worse than a bad Government is no Government. Libya is probably a case in point. In that sense, we need to support all United Nations efforts to establish a unified Government in that country.

With respect to Iraq, we believe that we should remain committed to helping the Iraqi Government to further sustain the transition process, in particular with regard to the inclusiveness of its policies, credible national reconciliation and reform. We believe that the Iraqis — the Iraqi Government and Iraqi forces — need and deserve our support. The Iraqi forces and the Peshmerga are fighting the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and need and deserve humanitarian assistance and support. Earlier this year, I visited a number of refugee camps in Iraq. They definitely need us and our support.

Finally, on the Middle East peace process, I think there is nobody in the Chamber and around this table — regardless of the different opinions that States, countries and people might have on the issue — who does not think that we should devote all our efforts to reviving the peace process in the Middle East. The process has, obviously, not been successful; in fact, it has been a very difficult. Although it has looked like a failure many times, there is no alternative to it. We have to persevere in trying to revive the peace process in the Middle East. In addition, as a member State of the European Union, which informs our perspective, we also believe that the European Union should play a more active role and take more responsibility for the process.

In conclusion, the current challenges in the Middle East and North Africa are multidimensional in nature, and therefore require multidimensional answers. As we watched people from Syria and other countries pass as refugees through Croatia, one thing that was clear was that they were middle-class people. They are people with degrees — high school, university degrees — exactly the people who are needed to rebuild a country after a war. If they leave the neighbourhood, if they leave and go somewhere in Western Europe or North America or God knows where, it is very unlikely that they will return. If they do not return, there will be nobody to rebuild Syria and other countries once the fighting and the war are over, and everybody will be left behind. We ourselves might even be left behind, if we do not act now.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Jean Asselborn, Minister for Foreign and European Affairs of Luxembourg.

Mr. Asselborn (Luxembourg) (*spoke in French*): I would first like to thank Russia for organizing today's debate on a subject that is of concern to us all.

With the so-called Islamic State in Syria and Iraq, and also in Libya, Al-Qaida on the Arabian Peninsula in Yemen, the Al-Nusra Front in the Golan Heights, Al-Shabaab in Somalia, the list of threats in the region is very long. Those terrorist groups threaten not only the Middle East and North Africa, they threaten the entire planet. In their destructive madness, they attack children, women and men. They attack the most vulnerable, minorities, sanctuaries, cultural heritage, archaeological treasures and the freedom of expression. They strive to break down the symbols of humanity and diversity.

In order to effectively combat the terrorist threat, it is important to understand the origins of its rise to power. The terrorist threat is not the root cause of the crises in the Middle East and North Africa. It is itself the result of underlying causes, and it is therefore necessary to address those root causes in order to eliminate it. Otherwise, even if Daesh or other terrorist entities were to disappear today, other organizations, perhaps more monstrous still, would only take over. The banner under which the terrorists align themselves may change, but the root causes of the emergence of those organizations remain. What are the root causes?

First, the rise of terrorist groups cannot be separated from their regional political context. Therefore, in Syria, Daesh has benefitted in large part from the effects of the brutal policies of the Al-Assad regime, which for more than four years has suppressed and slaughtered its own people with indiscriminate shelling and the dropping of barrel bombs. We must fight the terrorists in Syria without playing into the hands of the Al-Assad regime or forgetting the crimes that the regime commits daily. We need to bring increased humanitarian assistance to areas liberated from the grip of Daesh and to support the Syrian National Coalition. We must also support the efforts of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, Mr. Staffan de Mistura, aimed at achieving a political transition.

In Iraq, it is the feeling of marginalization, dispossession and humiliation on the part of the Sunni population that has played into the hands of extremists. We must support the reforms in the pipeline of the Government of Prime Minister Al Abadi, whose country has overcome divisions, while seeking to work within the framework of a truly inclusive political process.

In Libya as well as in Yemen, the United Nations mediation efforts should be further supported so as to achieve a ceasefire and the formation of a national unity Government that, with the support of the international community, would be able to isolate extremist groups, secure the territory and embark on the path of national reconciliation.

Secondly, among the root causes that promote radicalization and terrorism, there is the feeling of exclusion. The lack of prospects and economic opportunities for young people, including the difficulties of access to employment, serves to create a breeding ground for radicalization. It is therefore essential to invest in the development and well-being of young people. We must give them an opportunity to develop their potential by promoting their full participation in the life of society. It is in that spirit that our policy of cooperation for development deserves an important place in the education and professional training of young people. Luxembourg, with the support of UNICEF, has committed to the post-2015 Sustainable Development Agenda, which we have just adopted and which takes into account the specific needs and potential of children and youth in general.

Thirdly, I must mention another root cause of instability in the Middle East. I refer to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, a veritable human tragedy, while the peace process remains deadlocked. Today more than ever, it is imperative to convince our Israeli friends that the security of Israel depends on the creation by its side of a sovereign, democratic State of Palestine. We must encourage our Palestinian friends to persevere on the path of reconciliation and negotiation. That path is the best protection against terrorism. Let us all pledge to support the path that leads to the desired result, namely, the two-State solution.

Many of us participated in the hoisting of the Palestinian flag at the United Nations today. That flag must lead us all to fight the status quo and indifference.

I will conclude with this fact: we cannot change the past, but we have the duty to learn its lessons and to act accordingly in the future. I assure the Council that Luxembourg, including in its current role as President of the European Council, will spare no effort to counter the radicalization of terrorists and violent extremists by addressing the root causes.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Ioannis Kasoulides, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Cyprus.

Mr. Kasoulides (Cyprus): We welcome the timely initiative of the Russian Federation to convene this open debate. I would like briefly to provide our perspective on the issues before us.

The United Nations is, and should remain, at the apex of international order and justice. It should adapt to the broad spectrum of security challenges, and Security Council resolutions need again to become credible and actionable. No crisis can be resolved by a single Power or stakeholder. The complexity of the crises we are facing necessitates effective and mutually reinforcing multilateralism. I underline that the European Union must play its role in the settlement of the conflicts in our neighbourhood through its wide array of capacities and policies. While we formulate policies to counter terrorist threats, we need to bear in mind that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. Socioeconomic and political exclusion, youth unemployment and limited access to education play well into the hands of those who seek to propagate extremism.

Each country that faces such challenges is a unique case. With regard to Libya, the formation of a national unity Government is well overdue. It is imperative that, once it is in place, the United Nations, the European Union and other key stakeholders provide support in the domain of security-sector reform, institution-building and financial support. With regard to Syria, it is evident that our approach has thus far not alleviated the plight of the Syrian people, nor has it facilitated a political solution. The Geneva communiqué (S/2102/522, annex) remains key, and so is the need for a realistic political transition process.

Finally, a remark on Daesh. It is a threat that affects us all. There is much more to be done on the issue of tracking and interrupting financial flows to the terrorists. Aspects of that issue have been discussed elsewhere during the current session of the General Assembly, and it is evident that we need more robust Security Council action in that respect.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Miroslav Lajčák, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic.

Mr. Lajčák (Slovakia): At the outset, I would like to thank His Excellency Mr. Sergey Lavrov of the Russian Federation for convening this debate.

The unprecedented rise of terrorism is perhaps the most serious, shocking, painful and shameful reality facing us at the beginning of the twenty-first century. In the region of the Middle East and North Africa, but not only there, terrorism is sometimes the last, and sometimes the first, resort of individuals or groups that no longer feel the need to respect authority and abide by the rules. People resort to terrorism either because they choose to or because they have to.

We shall focus here on those who are forced to be a part of an extremist, radical and violent group. Their previous experience is the key to understanding them. Quite often, they belonged to a marginalized community or ethnic or religious minority. The problems they face — unemployment, poverty, the lack of life prospects for them and their children and, most important, no hope for a better future — have been blatantly exploited by groups like Daesh, which is a false, disillusioned and dangerous alternative form of governance rooted in fear and violence. Yet the military suppression of Daesh is only a fragment of the solution. The main part of a solution must be a commitment to better governance, better than Daesh's and also better than the one they had before.

In order to reach a stage of prevention, it is necessary to end the stage of continuing conflict. The international community cannot focus on preventive measures in an environment full of terror and fear where, as we speak, children hold weapons in their hands, and hospitals and schools are subject to deliberate attacks.

Successful political transitions in the Middle East require strong and consensual international support. Any foreign involvement in favour of individual parties can break the fragile trust in the political track. A sincere, candid and regular exchange of views produces an increase in understanding and, ideally, in trust. That, in turn, might lead to a more flexible and increased exchange of information and intelligence, and police and judicial cooperation, which are all vital components of counter-terrorism efforts.

In addressing the issue of foreign terrorist fighters, it is crucial for each State to participate in order to prevent gaps in implementation. Weak links are windows of opportunity for foreign fighters. At the same time, we need to keep in mind the balance between security and respect for human rights. Security will not be sustainable unless it is reached with respect for the rule of law.

All the relevant resolutions must be fully implemented in a timely manner, whether they be adopted under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations or not. The consensus of Security Council members is far too important not to focus all our efforts on trying to achieve it. Monitoring by United Nations entities and other relevant international organizations with competence and expertise in the matter should help to ensure better implementation by States of their commitments. For that reason, I must say that I appreciate the ongoing efforts of the Secretary-General and the relevant United Nations bodies.

The role of the Security Council in the fight against terrorism remains crucial. It is a cornerstone in the maintenance of international peace and security. The General Assembly also has considerable potential and an important role to play. We look forward to the Secretary-General's global action plan against violent extremism. We hope it will reflect many of the inspiring proposals raised at the regional conferences on countering violent extremism.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Iyad Ameen Madani, Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation.

Mr. Madani: It is indeed a privilege to have this opportunity to speak to this body. I wish to thank the Russian Federation for scheduling this important and timely open debate during its presidency of the Security Council, in conjunction with the high-level segment of the General Assembly, on the settlement of conflicts in the Middle East and North Africa and countering terrorist threat in the region.

At the outset, let me align myself, as Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), with the statement delivered by His Excellency Sheikh Sabah Khalid Al Hamad Al Sabah, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the State of Kuwait, in Kuwait's capacity as the Chair of the OIC Ministerial Council.

As a committed and strategic partner of the United Nations system and of the international community, the OIC exerts every possible effort to bring remedies to the intertwined and daunting challenges the Middle East and North Africa region faces. We sincerely believe that, while we assume responsibility as the international community to provide solutions and remedies, we can only be on a better footing if we can honestly and properly diagnose the historical backgrounds, roots causes and dynamics that have brought about all the disasters and failures that we have to deal with today. We must analyse whether the international and regional peace and security mechanisms are capable of overcoming today's hurdles.

The remnants of colonialism, ill-conceived Cold War strategies, letting the Palestinian people suffer the consequences of an unjust and illegal occupation, and the invasion of Iraq, which devastated the social fabric of the country with dangerous regional fallouts, all created a climate whereby the region is unable to invest in human capital. Millions of Iraqis sought haven and jobs outside of Iraq long before we heard of Daesh. The region's resources have been spent on the purchase of arms, to the great satisfaction of those trotting the globe on behalf of the arms industries.

The paralysis in the region, the absence of a paradigm among its countries for peaceful coexistence and the intellectual malaise that took over a Muslim world intent on regurgitating, instead of reinvigorating, its traditions, cultural expressions and intellectual discourse, coupled with the absence of international collective political will to tackle the conflicts in the Middle East, and what seems to be, if the members allow me to say, chronic divisions within the Council, have allowed such menaces in the region to continue and reach the proportions we are here to contemplate today. Therefore, where should we look for a way out?

Those who see Islam as the source of division and violence and search for a core a structure within Islam that lead Muslims, just because they are Muslims, to division and violence, simply ignore history and the story of the great Muslim civilization. They also overlook a century full of wars and ethnic conflicts and alienation, which we all carry as a heavy inheritance of humankind where Muslims have been mostly the victims. Also, those who make the assumption that this region is self-destructive by nature gloss over the great games or interests that play on the stage of the region, a region that has rarely been left alone to develop and mature and create its own institutions.

Instead of taking custody of the region, we must address the multifaceted dimensions of its conflicts, listen to its people and remember the hardship, the recent history that led to what we have now in Iraq, Syria and Libya. Within that context, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation has initiated, is initiating and will continue to initiate specific projects that focus on such understanding in order to address the political and socioeconomic contexts that bring forth conditions conducive to conflict and the need to counter all types of radical extremist discourse in order to delegitimize the violent and manipulative acts, whether they be based on ideology or claims of cultural superiority. They address also the underlying causes of sectarian violence, the attempts to politicize the sectarian differences and to put undue emphasis on sects as the essence of identity — and also to always remember and consider, in the history of all movements, whether liberation movements or others, the potential of external actors penetrating terrorist and extremist groups for the purpose of serving their own political agendas.

Today is the day that finally the flag of Palestine flies high at the United Nations premises. This jubilant development is a reflection of the overwhelming majority of the international community in support of the just cause and inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, without which radicalization, frustration, humiliation and the sense of historic betrayal will remain deep in the conscious of the region and its people.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Didier Reynders, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for European Affairs of the Kingdom of Belgium.

Mr. Reynders (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): The instability in the Middle East and North Africa over the past four years is at the centre of Belgium's concerns. I thank the Russian Federation for having taken the initiative of convening this debate, which complements our discussions yesterday when we met in the meeting on the coalition against the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and violent extremism at the initiative of the United States.

As again demonstrated in the general debate of the General Assembly, we are united in our determination to eradicate terrorism. The Security Council has adopted resolutions listing many terrorist organizations, including ISIL and Al-Qaida, and calling on all the States Members of the United Nations to shoulder their responsibilities in the face of the threat. We must continue with our actions to eradicate this scourge by taking measures in each of our countries, in particular to dry up the financing in order to contain the flow of foreign combatants who join the ranks of terrorist organizations. Achieving those goals requires stepped up cooperation among States in all aspects of the counter-terrorism struggle.

In Syria and Iraq, the coalition against ISIL, which is supported by some 70 countries, is fighting with resolve against ISIL. Its work should be completed coherently and in a coordinated fashion through the individual action of all Members of the United Nations by clearly and exclusively targeting recognized terrorist groups.

We will not be able to defeat the terrorist threat if the legitimate concerns of the populations are not taken into account and if human rights, the responsibility for which rests primarily with States, are not respected. The use of inhumane weapons, such as barrel bombs, and responding with violent outbursts to demands for democracy, as in Syria, fuel the recruitment of terrorist organizations that present themselves as alternatives to dictatorship. We must also obviously support neighbouring countries, which have demonstrated an unrivalled generosity by welcoming the populations who fled terrorism, war and repression.

In Syria, we must urgently work towards an inclusive political transition. Belgium supports the efforts of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General Staffan de Mistura. I also call on all countries that have influence over the actors in Syria to encourage them to urgently come to the table so that the language of weapons finally ceases. We know that there must be negotiations with the regime, as well as with the moderate opposition forces, but the transition has to occur in parallel with military action against Daesh.

In Iraq, the Government of Prime Minister Al Abadi has demonstrated its determination to move towards a more inclusive policy. We must continue to support it so that its efforts are reinforced and sped up.

The situation in Libya remains a factor of instability for North Africa and the Sahelian region. Terrorist movements, some of which claim to be the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, are profiting from the political vacuum. Neighbouring Tunisia, whose evolution is remarkable, has become weaker. The Libyan parties concerned must urgently engage in an inclusive political process to form a transition Government, and I welcome the tireless efforts of Special Representative Bernadino León in that regard.

In Yemen, where the process of transition has been compromised by negative actors, the humanitarian situation is deteriorating perilously. There must be a political process without delay to end the suffering of the population.

Finally, we must relaunch a credible peace process aimed at establishing a Palestinian State side by side with the State of Israel with respect for the concerns of peace, sovereignty and security of their respective populations. The recent growth of tension in Jerusalem underlines that urgency.

Once again, Mr. President, I thank you for organizing this debate and hope that we will progress both in waging an effective militarily fight against Daesh, and in finding a political solution in the various countries I just mentioned.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Mauro Vieira, Minister for External Relations of the Federative Republic of Brazil.

Mr. Vieira (Brazil): I congratulate you, Mr. President,- for convening this open debate and for bringing us together to discuss the serious challenges that the world faces today in promoting peace and stability in the Middle East and North Africa. We also appreciate that the concept note prepared by the Russian Federation (S/2015/678, annex) encourages a more in-depth reflection on the primary causes of conflicts and terrorism.

The threats to international peace and security in the Middle East and North Africa have been a recurring topic in the Council. The increase in the number and complexity of threats in those two strategic regions attests to our collective inability to solve long-lasting conflicts and to prevent the outbreak of new ones. As Brazil has consistently upheld in this Council, we must address those problems by conceiving an overarching strategy based on a combination of diplomacy and peacebuilding efforts.

Last year, we witnessed the third tragic war in five years in Gaza. The peace process between Israelis and Palestinians has remained stalled. Violence reached unimaginable levels of brutality in Syria, and the prospects for resolving the conflict remain elusive. The so-called Islamic State took control of large parts of Iraq and Syria and has been perpetrating the most barbaric crimes against innocent civilians. Both Libya and Yemen are falling into a spiral of political disputes and violence, resulting in destruction and serious humanitarian crises.

Let me state in no uncertain terms Brazil's utmost repudiation for all forms of terrorism and extremism. There are simply no justifiable grounds for terrorist acts. The Brazilian Government was appalled by the acts of provocation that resulted in the senseless destruction of cultural and historic heritage sites in Syria, Iraq, Mali and elsewhere. It should be noted that the common trait to all those situations is the international community's failure in dealing with the underlying causes of conflicts. As long as we disregard poverty and the fragility of national institutions as drivers of armed conflict, there will be no lasting solution in sight.

Time and again, we have seen the harmful effects of bending the rules and invoking exceptional rights in order to justify military interventions. Those strategies have enfeebled the multilateral system and aggravated the situation on the ground. Iraq and Libya are two clear examples of the failure of any approach based on vicious cycles of threats, sanctions and violence. Military interventions led only to weak national institutions, increased sectarianism, power vacuums and arms proliferation, paving the way for the rise of radical groups such as the Islamic State. Those groups thrive in the absence of the State and they benefit from the flow of weapons to non-State actors.

It is high time that the Security Council assess the inventory of preventable tragedies and learn from past mistakes. We should all commit to demonstrate our resolve to focus on political dialogue and preventive actions. The use of sanctions and military force should always be the last resort and, when it occurs, it must be in line with the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations. What we really need is better diplomacy to face the numerous challenges that still lie ahead.

The humanitarian tragedy that emerged from the conflicts in the Middle East and North Africa remains a matter of great concern. We commend the work done by the United Nations agencies and its partners to help millions of people in need, as well as the outstanding generosity of many countries in the region, including Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt and Turkey, which have been receiving the bulk of Syrian refugees.

Brazil has been striving to contribute to these humanitarian efforts. We have issued more than 7,700 entry visas for Syrian residents affected by the crisis and provided food and medicine to help alleviate the dire situation faced by refugees and displaced people in the region. As President Dilma Rousseff pledged before the General Assembly at its seventieth session (see A/70/PV.13), Brazil will continue to host those who had to flee their home country and need a place to restart their lives. As the home of the largest Syrian diaspora in the world and a country committed to international peace and security, Brazil is ready to shoulder its responsibilities on the diplomatic and humanitarian fronts.

Even in light of those tragic facts, there is still reason for hope, hope generated by a renewed belief in the virtues of diplomacy. The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action regarding the Islamic Republic of Iran's Nuclear Programme, and Security Council resolution 2235 (2015) on Syria's chemical weapons demonstrate that when political will is present, reaching an agreement is possible even on complex and highly sensitive issues. Brazil commends all those involved in those efforts and their persistence in dialogue and negotiation. That sets a positive trend that should help us to effectively address the ongoing conflicts in the region. We should look up to those examples of successful diplomatic engagements and redouble our collective efforts to halt and settle the conflicts in the Middle East.

Peace talks between Israel and Palestine must be urgently resumed under parameters that could lead to a two-State solution.

There can be no more delay in achieving an inclusive political solution in Syria. A first step to encourage dialogue and avoid the aggravation of conflict should be halting the flow of arms into the country. We look forward to a renewed political process, led by the United Nations, to deal with the situation in Syria. Brazil wishes for a territorially united, sovereign, plural and democratic Syria to emerge from the ashes of war.

In Libya and Yemen, the international community should be united in condemning violence, avoiding the use of unilateral force and working with the parties to promote dialogue, bridge differences and reach a peaceful and durable solution.

Diplomacy, cooperation and multilateralism should guide us in the quest for a more stable and peaceful Middle East and North Africa. The Council has a primary responsibility in encouraging political dialogue and addressing the root causes of conflicts. It is our duty to restore the Council's capacity to fulfil its duty to uphold international peace and security. Its effectiveness and continued authority require that it be viewed as legitimate and representative.

After 70 years of work, a reformed Security Council, with new permanent and non-permanent members, would be better positioned to adequately address the challenges of a multipolar world and lead a new phase of active diplomatic engagement to resolve those disputes. The opportunity is before us. We need look no further than the situations that have been discussed in today's debate to realize how urgent the task is.

Brazil has been an enthusiast of multilateralism and everything the United Nations stands for since 1945. We hope that over the next 70 years and beyond, the international community can live up to the promise, enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, to rid future generations of the scourge of war and all forms of meaningless suffering.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Erlan Idrissov, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

Mr. Idrissov (Kazakhstan) (*spoke in Russian*): Thank you very much, Mr. President, for giving me the floor, and please pass on my country's gratitude to Mr. Lavrov for his initiative in convening this meeting for an open debate on some of today's most urgent and pressing issues.

(*spoke in English*)

As we continue to witness unprecedented crises of grave magnitude in the Middle East and North Africa, we believe that now is the time to jointly address those issues. For decades the situation in the region has been a major factor in the destabilization of global security.

We are absolutely sure that the current situation in the Middle East will start to seriously improve only if the Palestinian issue is resolved. Kazakhstan recognizes the Palestinian people's legitimate right to self-determination and strongly supports the creation of an independent State of Palestine, coexisting peacefully with Israel within its 1967 borders. We also support Palestine's full-fledged membership in the United Nations, and we welcome today's ceremony in which the Palestinian flag was raised at United Nations Headquarters. We see a two-State solution as the only viable option for lasting peace, and we call on Israeli and Palestinian leaders to demonstrate political responsibility and goodwill in order to reach a historic peace agreement that meets the legitimate aspirations of their peoples.

As we celebrate the seventieth anniversary of the United Nations, let us remind ourselves of the events that humankind had to endure in the last century, including two world wars and many revolutions. The tragedy that we all had to go through is the permanent impulse pushing us to work constantly to achieve peace and security. The Arab Spring once again proved that revolutions only hinder human development, propel societies backwards and damage inter-State relations.

We must all reject the unconstitutional and illegal use of military force, including external foreign military interventions, which lead only to the destruction of statehood.

The humanitarian disaster in Syria is no longer just a regional issue. The crisis has spread far beyond the Middle East. A good illustration of that is that more than 200 Kazakh citizens are fighting in the area of Syria and Iraq. We support the efforts by the United Nations, the League of Arab States, the United States of America, Russia and other stakeholders. Kazakhstan firmly believes that the crisis should be resolved only through genuine political dialogue among all Syrian parties, with the unbiased support of external actors.

In May Kazakhstan hosted a meeting of Syrian opposition leaders, at their request. The negotiations were based on the following key principles: respect for the Geneva process, the condemnation of all forms of terrorism and a collective call to end foreign paramilitary involvement. In two days' time, the same groups will meet again in Kazakhstan for a second round. We do not interfere; we simply provide a platform in the hope that Syrians themselves will find a road to peace and reconciliation.

In 1992, in an effort to ensure peace and security in the entire Asian region, Kazakhstan initiated the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA), a unique pan-continental security forum for implementing confidence-building measures and forging and enhancing political dialogue and interaction aimed at achieving peace and stability in Asia. Today, CICA stretches from Cairo to Seoul and unites 26 countries from every subregion of the continent.

We are confident that spiritual and religious leaders play a significant role in fostering inter-ethnic and interreligious harmony and mutual respect, which is why Kazakhstan convenes and hosts the triennial Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions, which provides a platform for dialogue among religious and political leaders for the sake of peace. In July, Kazakhstan hosted a regional conference on countering violent extremism to which we invited representatives from the countries of Central Asia, China, Iran, Pakistan, India and the republics of the Caucasus. We believe that all these things are a symbol of our sincere contribution to a united fight against the evils of terrorism.

While recognizing terrorism as a global threat, we need to establish a counter-terrorism coalition led by the United Nations and to develop a common mechanism to defeat this evil and bring its perpetrators and their supporters to justice. The current United Nations mechanisms aimed at countering terrorism, including the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, should be made legally binding through the adoption of relevant Security Council resolutions. Two days ago, in his remarks at the general debate of the General Assembly (see A/70/PV.13), my President called for the establishment of a global anti-terrorist network under the auspices of the United Nations. We will lobby strongly for and support that initiative and will ask every Member State to support it. It is necessary to create an agreed-on list of terrorist organizations, at which point the Security Council alone should have a mandate to outlaw them.

In conclusion, we reiterate our commitment to the collective efforts to fight international terrorism and to ensure peace in the Middle East, based on freedom and justice for all.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Nikos Kotzias, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Hellenic Republic.

Mr. Kotzias (Greece): I would like to start by thanking the Russian Federation for organizing this important meeting. The issues we are addressing in this debate are closely intertwined and have precipitated a migration and refugee crisis.They have driven hundreds of thousands of people from the region, creating new pressures on the societies and economies of countries neighbouring on and far beyond the region itself.

Greece, which is situated at the crossroads of the refugee crisis, is also particularly concerned about the fate of the minority communities in Iraq and the region, including Christian communities, which, after two millenniums in the region, are facing an existential threat, owing to the atrocities perpetrated by the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS).

It is clear that the threat posed by ISIS continues to undermine the stability and political dynamics of Iraq and Syria, leaving the security situation in the region very volatile. But for some time it has been equally clear that, through the foreign fighters phenomenon and the migrant and refugee crisis, waves of instability are being felt much further afield, on a global scale. The crucial issue for the international community is therefore to implement a consistent, determined and multifaceted strategy for countering ISIS.

The horrendous tactics that ISIS is using are serving to unite regional States, including many with divergent interests. That is truly a key element in our common endeavour to defeat ISIS: a determined stance on the part of all actors. However, ISIS cannot be defeated by military means alone. We also have to address the financing of jihadist organizations and their recruitment tactics, including the use of the Internet and social media. Last but not least, it is crucial for the international community to work collectively and in unity in order to arrive at the long-overdue solution to the Syrian crisis through the immediate initiation of an inclusive political process.

The war needs to stop. There needs to be a grand alliance for peace, an alliance for the reconstruction of Syria. We must give back to the youth of Syria, and of the Arab world in general, their right to dream and to lead a different life. Otherwise, without that dream or prospects for a different life, they will not fight for peace and the reconstruction of Syria.

The President: (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Karl Erjavec, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia.

Mr. Erjavec (Slovenia) (*spoke in French*): The stability and prosperity of the Middle East and North Africa continues to rank among the most urgent priorities for the international community. The region represents one of the cradles of our civilization, and it is both culturally and religiously rich. In that context, we condemn in no uncertain terms the destruction of cultural heritage perpetrated in Syria and Iraq.

The situations in Syria, Iraq, Libya and Yemen are complex and extremely disturbing. Israeli-Palestinian negotiations are still at an impasse. The political, economic and social transition in the Maghreb also faces numerous obstacles.

Terrorism and violent extremism — in whatever form or manifestation — cannot and must not be tolerated. The atrocities committed against civilians by Daesh, Al-Qaieda, the Al-Nusra Front and similar extremist groups are beyond human understanding. Given the extent and nature of the crimes committed in Iraq and Syria, they can be qualified in no other way than as crimes against humanity, war crimes and genocide — with women and children being particularly vulnerable. Extremist groups constitute a complex terrorist threat that should not be solely dealt with by military means. Rather, we need to turn to diplomacy, mediation and conflict prevention. Through education and open dialogue, we need to improve our familiarity and knowledge of the other.

Young people represent one of the most vulnerable groups facing radicalization and extremism. When we talk about prevention, we mean that we are looking for positive alternatives for youth. That entails education and creating employment opportunities and an environment of hope.

We must also focus on the concept of responsibility. The international community must find a way to address the impunity currently enjoyed by those who commit such horrible crimes. The perpetrators of such atrocities must be brought to justice for their actions. The International Criminal Court plays a crucial role in the fight against impunity. We call on all States in the region to accede to the Rome Statute of the Court. We continue to advocate for the Security Council's referral of the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court.

The violence and atrocities committed by extremist groups have triggered massive displacements. Thousands of Syrians, Iraqis and Afghans are fleeing their countries every day, resulting in a catastrophic humanitarian situation. Millions of people are displaced within the region or are seeking refuge in neighbouring countries and well beyond the region, including Europe. The international community must respond effectively to the immediate needs of those at risk by adopting an approach based on needs, all the while respecting basic humanitarian principles.

We must do everything in our power to restore peace in the Middle East. The resumption of Israeli-Palestinian talks is of crucial importance for the entire region. Sustainable solutions to the crises in Syria and Iraq can be brought about only through dialogue among Syrians and Iraqis. The role of the international community is to assist Syrians and Iraqis in the pursuit of such dialogue.

Let me conclude by assuring the Security Council that Slovenia fully supports the efforts of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria, Mr. Staffan de Mistura.

The President: (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Abdullah Ghobash, Minister of State of the United Arab Emirates.

Mr. Ghobash (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the delegation of the United Arab Emirates, I would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency for this month. We wish you every success in your functions. We would also like to thank your predecessor, the Permanent Representative of Nigeria, for her excellent guidance of our work last month. We also thank you, Sir, for convening this special open debate on the current state of affairs in the Middle East and North Africa — especially because, at present, the security challenges pose a real, serious threat to peace and security in the world.

Extremism and terrorist activities have increased over the past five years, as have the barbaric crimes committed by extremist and terrorist organizations — led by Daesh and Al-Qaida — which have taken advantage of the political vacuum and instability in countries in the region, such as Yemen, Libya, Syria and Iraq, in order to impose their domination, expand their activities and attract and mobilize marginalized elements of societies, with a view to implement their plan to implement a programme of sabotage within and beyond the region. In that regard, the United Arab Emirates believes that restoring peace and security in the region could be accomplished by the following steps.

First, there is a need to resolve the major problems that have persisted for far too long in the region. To that end, the United Nations should assume its responsibility to achieve a final, lasting, comprehensive and just settlement of the Palestinian question. The continued occupation and flagrant violations of human rights on the part of the occupying Power are among the major threats to peace and security in the region. That affords terrorist groups a substantial opportunity to take advantage of serious humanitarian situations to influence frustrated young people and recruit them into their destructive programme. We emphasize the importance of the Security Council intervening to put an end to the aggression of extremist Jewish groups aimed at desacratig the Al-Aqsa Mosque. We need to do this in order to avert a dangerous conflagration in the region. The Emirates also stress the need to step up the pace in the settlement of this conflict, which has lasted for far too long, so as to establish an independent Palestinian State within the 1967 borders, with Jerusalem as its capital.

We also call upon the Security Council to heed the calls and initiatives of the Arab Group, which has, since last year, been inviting the Council to adopt an effective resolution for the relaunching of the peace process. We also stress the importance of the Security Council's shouldering its responsibilities in the area of international peace and security. We therefore call on the Council to take action to settle the Syrian crisis through a political transition process and the creation of a national Government in Syria, while providing humanitarian assistance to the Syrian people, refugees, displaced persons and the countries that host them. We hope that the creation of four working groups, at the initiative of the Secretary-General, will represent a positive step towards a political solution and putting an end to the suffering of the Syrian people.

Secondly, we need to support the legitimate Government in conflict-affected countries so that they can face the challenges posed by terrorist groups. In Yemen, the support provided by the coalition of regional and international countries helped the legitimate Government to deal with the Houthi coup d'état, which led to military and humanitarian successes that made it possible to retake Aden and reinstate the Government of Yemen. We deem it vital to comply with resolution 2216 (2015), and we are working in cooperation with the United Nations to meet the humanitarian needs of our brotherly countries.

We call also for support for the elected Libyan Government. We must lift the embargo, which is tying the Government's hands with respect to Daesh and other terrorist groups. We also commend the work of the Secretary-General's Special Representative in Libya, and we welcome the political agreement that has been finalized. We call for the establishment of a Government of national accord.

Thirdly, we must to respect the principles of the Charter on respect for sovereignty and non-interference, and refrain from any ctions that could undermine the security and stability of countries. Foreign interventions, even under the pretext of settling conflicts, only create more violence and instability. The United Arab Emirates believes that the agreement on the Iranian nuclear programme is a good opportunity to begin a new chapter in regional cooperation. We call upon Iran fully to comply with its commitments under the Joint Plan of Action and the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, as well as United Nations resolutions, in particular resolution 2231 (2015).

Fourthly, we must devise more effective joint action in order to face the challenges in the region. We also need to include countries and regional organizations in the decision-making processes in the region that concerns them.

Fifthly, we must coordinate global efforts and shoulder our common responsibilities in the face of these challenges and threats. We must do this through cooperation in order to put an end to the root causes of extremism and terrorism, which means that we must also have lasting solutions, through education or media programmes, the empowerment of women and taking advantage of the full potential of young people. We must channel these energies in a peaceful way. We also must provide social assistance to marginalized sectors of society.

We believe that we need to have a national model. My country has a national plan for tolerance and moderation to combat extremism and that condemns the barbaric message of extremists. To that end, we have created the international Hedayah centre to fight extremism. Along with the United States, we have created a call centre to counter extremist propaganda and incitation to violence. We have passed a law against anti-discrimination in all its forms, and we are ready to cooperate with the United Nations and the international community to strengthen our efforts in the service of peace and security in our country, in our region and the world.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to Mr. Péter Szijjártó, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of Hungary.

Mr. Szijjártó (Hungary) (*spoke in Russian*): I wish to thank you, Mr. President, for having convened this open debate of the Security Council in order to discuss this very important topic. Countering terrorism in the Middle East can be successful only if we pool our global efforts. Unifying our global efforts requires global cooperation.

(*spoke in English*)

A decade ago, when we had a chance to watch reports from the Middle East on television, we were shocked at the scenes we saw. But at that time we were fairly sure that these kinds of developments would never happen in Europe, on our continent. What we are experiencing today shows how wrong we were. Now the growing threat of terrorism has become part of everyday life in Europe.

The Islamic State in Iraq and Sham (ISIS) has built a global network, including in Europe, and has around 30,000 foreign fighters, who pose a significant threat to us. ISIS has caused more damage to our common cultural heritage than any armed conflict or natural disaster since the conclusion of the Second World War. ISIS destabilizes the region around Europe and is one of the factors that has led to an unstable situation in our neighbourhood.

The other factor is the series of bad international political decisions that resulted in the creation of long-term war-torn zones in North Africa and the Middle East region.

Because of ISIS gaining additional territory and because of the aforementioned bad international political decisions, the European neighbourhood is more unstable than it has been in years. These developments have led to a situation in which we must say that the European Union is facing the greatest challenge since its creation. Currently, the European Union is facing the challenge of mass migration, a mass migration with an unlimited source of supply of people. Let us just take into consideration the fact that there are 8 million people living on humanitarian aid in Iraq. There are 12 million people living on humanitarian aid in Syria, of whom almost 7 million are already internally displaced. In addition, the sub-Saharan region, according to some reports, is home to more than 12.5 million internally displaced persons. That is not even to mention Yemen, Libya or the situation in Pakistan or even in Afghanistan.

So if we take all of these elements into consideration, then maybe we can agree that it is absolutely not an exaggeration to say that there are around 30 million to 35 million people around Europe who might make a quick decision to leave their homes and hit the road, heading towards Europe. That is why I think that it is in our common interest to avoid this challenge, because if there are 30 million to 35 million people heading towards Europe, that can destabilize our continent: first the periphery, and then the central part.

In order to prevent that, we have to stabilize the situation in North Africa and the Middle East region very quickly, as soon as possible. If we agree on that, then it gives us two tasks.

The first task is to increase our efforts to combat ISIS. Although we have formed the broadest coalition ever, we have achieved only limited success. That is why we have to make sure that ISIS does not gain more territory, and we have to take back te territory that ISIS has occupied. We have to make sure that the International Criminal Court investigates crimes committed by ISIS, because we must not leave such crimes without serious consequences for the perpetrators. We Hungarians recently took a decision to deploy 112 troops in Erbil, in the Kurdish region, in order to carry out force-protection duties. Those troops will soon take part in training Peshmerga troops as well.

The second task would be to stop the war and make peace in Syria. It appears that there is broad agreement that the only way to achieve peace in Syria is through negotiations. In order for negotiations to be successful, we need maximal political inclusiveness.

We have to be aware that we will not be able to overcome these difficulties without pragmatic cooperation between Russia and the trans-Atlantic community. Recent developments in multilateral diplomacy, as Council members will recall, have proved that even the most serious and complicated challenges can be overcome if there is global will and global cooperation. In our view, global will and global cooperation cannot leave out Russia. Without a quick reconsideration of the relationship between Russia and the trans-Atlantic community, we are not going to be able to stabilize the situation in North Africa and in the Middle East region. Furthermore, if we are not able to stabilize the situation in North Africa and the Middle East, then we will not effect a the decrease in the migratory pressure on Europe. It should be stated that Europe is not going to be able to bear the heavy burden of a mass migration on its own.

In conclusion, we should not commit such mistakes in the future because doing so could destabilize our continent, Europe, because our neighbourhood — our surroundings — have already been destabilized.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Didier Burkhalter, Head of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs of Switzerland.

Mr. Burkhalter (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): I thank you, Mr. President, and the Russian presidency for having initiated this debate.

Increasing instability and human suffering in the Middle East, massive refugee flows, the rise of transnational terrorism all call for a swift and determined response that includes not only additional humanitarian assistance but also, primarily, a political solution to the violent conflicts that have plunged the region into chaos. The impasses have lasted long enough — much too long, in fact — and Syria needs our help.

A national dialogue should be initiated to begin to end the bloody war between the Damascus Government and the opposition. Switzerland supports the efforts of the United Nations Special Envoy to encourage thematic discussions in the Syrian working groups established to address key aspects of the 2012 Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex). From the beginning we have supported the United Nations efforts to find a political solution to the Syrian crisis. We will continue along that path until peace is achieved, by providing experts, logistical support and financial resources as needed. We urge Syria to take advantage of thr opportunity to participate in the working groups. We also demand the rapid formation of an international contact group that would be responsible for supporting the search for a political solution.

All regional and international actors share the same responsibility for stabilizing Syria. They must come to the table and discuss the issues. Switzerland welcomes the strengthening of diplomatic efforts to find common ground. Now is the time to leave behind the maximalist positions and finally seek compromise. The only path that will lead to peace is that of an inclusive dialogue that includes the Syrian Government and which aims to define the parameters of a managed transition. That process will difficult, given the enormous sacrifices that will have to be made. The parties to the conflict will have to make difficult choices to find compromise. But the only way that a lasting solution can be achieved is if all parties work sincerely for peace. The millions of women, children and men who have suffered the atrocities of this war deserve such efforts and sincerity.

An inclusive dialogue and power-sharing are not only vital for Syria, but also for stabilizing Iraq and resolving the conflicts in Yemen and Libya. My country, Switzerland, with its multiparty Government, is willing to offer its expertise. We are prepared to facilitate discussions in Geneva, should that be appropriate, and to support the efforts of the United Nations.

With regard to the fight against the terrorist threat in the Middle East and North Africa, terrorist groups such as the so-called Islamic State cannot be part of a political solution. However, resolving those conflicts will weaken terrorist groups. And again, a key role in that regard falls to the United Nations. We are concerned about the apparent lack of coordination among various military actions in Syria, and we ask the Security Council to assume its responsibility in leading the efforts to oppose terrorism and re-establish peace and security in Syria.

We also welcome the announcement by the Secretary-General on the presentation this year on a plan of action to prevent violent extremism. Military force and coercive measures to enforce the law are not enough to eliminate terrorism. We must also ensure that young people are able to resist the demagoguery of the terrorists, and for that we must to combine peace and security measures, development measures and human rights measures. In other words, we must mobilize all the strengths of the United Nations.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Daniel Mitov, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Bulgaria.

Mr. Mitov (Bulgaria): Today's debate is timely, as the Middle East and North Africa are going through a deep political and security crisis that has ushered in the expansion of violent extremism. In Iraq, the response to terrorists has been a process of reconciliation initiated by Prime Minister Al Abadi. Those efforts are a prerequisite for a united, stable and peaceful Iraq. In Syria, the issue of countering terrorism has unfortunately been manipulated by a regime that has used the extremist threat that it itself created and triggered to justify the violence exercised against its own people. The strengthening of the reconciliation policy in Iraq and the need for promoting an inclusive political transition in Syria reminds us also of Libya, Yemen and other places where we hope for Governments and States that are indeed inclusive.

As long as there is no peace in the Middle East, violent extremism will take advantage of the situation. The terrorist scourge of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) knows no borders. From Syria and Iraq, it is moving to Libya. It carries out attacks in Mali, Yemen, Tunisia and elsewhere. As a partner in the global coalition to counter ISIL, Bulgaria is working to degrade, and ultimately defeat, the threat it poses to the world. But violent extremism continues to expand, and we should start taking further measures that will produce the necessary effects, including in the countries of the Middle East and North Africa.

Faced with such a grave situation, we believe that the United Nations could undertake further actions in stepping up international cooperation in countering terrorism. Bulgaria looks forward to the presentation of the Secretary-General's plan of action on preventing violent extremism. Following the Council's adoption of resolution 2178 (2014), on countering foreign terrorist fighters, Bulgaria has enacted legislation to amend the penal code and operational improvements with regard to travel documents. Measures also need to be taken to draft a strategy for countering terrorism, radicalization and extremism for the period 2015-2020.

My country is at the crossroads between Europe and the Middle East and bears the consequences of the unprecedented migration pressure generated by conflicts in the region and the expansion of Daesh. Besides addressing the consequences through measures, including those outlined in our national strategy on migration, asylum and integration, Bulgaria shares the view that its root causes should be immediately addressed. It is necessary to seek a lasting settlement of the conflicts in the Middle East and North Africa and to tackle human rights violations, dire socioeconomic situations and the lack of good governance.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Kristian Jensen, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Denmark.

Mr. Jensen (Denmark): The main discussions in New York about Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and other terrorist organizations have served to remind us once again that the threat from terrorism and violent extremism is accurate and real. Violent extremism and terrorism are not only a threat to innocent civilians of the countries of the Middle East and North Africa, they are a global challenge. To counter the terrorist threat effectively, we must be guided by the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. Peace and respect for human rights go hand in hand. The international rule of law is not about selectively invoking tranquility as a shield for oppressive regimes while at the same time ignoring the legitimate rights of States in other regions of the world.

A functioning global order requires us to protect the innocent victims of terrorism where States fail to do so. It requires a comprehensive effort that involves military, economic and political being deployed strategically and through the broadest possible coalition. It was therefore good to hear this morning the Russian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Lavrov, say that Russia would participate in the fight against ISIL — and we can see now that they have always been militarily active. But it was also troubling to hear that it was difficult to see who Russia has been militarily active against. Rumours say that it was not ISIL that was hit by the military aggression from Russia this morning.

What we also need to do is to focus on how we can prevent persons from turning to terrorism in the first place. Countering extremism by investing in prevention measures, education and jobs for youths is key, as is paying attention to the need to extend citizen participation and democracy to all. Our own experience has shown us that we must focus on applying an early preventive effort while at the same time being capable of managing more eminent threats.

In Georgia and Tunisia, we are launching new initiatives with the Governments to counter radicalism. Those include a focus on youths, dialogue and preventive measures. To reduce the appeal of ISIL to potential foreign fighters, we are supporting initiatives to investigate and document war crimes and human rights abuses in Iraq and Syria committed by ISIL and other extremists.

Violent extremism impacts the security of us all — in Copenhagen, Baghdad, Paris and New York. But it also hinders development and economic growth globally. It is therefore important for us that the global framework for countering this threat be firmly anchored at the United Nations and that all Member States and others in the United Nations family are actively engaged in the efforts to build resilience and to counter violent extremism wherever we meet it. A successful approach to counter-terrorism must therefore revolve around partnerships.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Abdelkader Messahel, Minister for Maghreb Affairs, the African Union and the League of Arab States of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria.

Mr. Messahel (Algeria) (*spoke in French*): First of all, I would like to congratulate the Russian Federation on its presidency of the Security Council this month and for its initiative in organizing this debate on the sensitive issue of resolving conflicts in the Middle East and North Africa and the related issue of combating the terrorist threat in the region. The relationship between those two phenomena is a reality that challenges us every day. In occupied Palestine, Syria, Iraq, Yemen, Libya, Afghanistan, Somalia and the Sahel, the outbreak and persistence of crises and conflicts have today a direct impact on the worsening threat of terrorism and the proliferation of terrorist groups. Those crises and conflicts bring to mind three fundamental aspects.

First, the weakening of States affected by that scourge benefits first and foremost those groups, because it indirectly creates opportunities for them to consolidate and develop their criminal activities.

Secondly, it offers them opportunities for interaction and cooperation with major transnational criminal groups, which obviously protect the terrorists and enable them to conduct activities that now include human trafficking, illicit trafficking in natural resources, illegal migration, trafficking in ancient cultural artefacts, kidnapping and drug and arms trafficking. All those activities are now recognized as facts, including by the United Nations.

Thirdly, the absence of negotiated political solutions promotes the emergence of chaos and lawless areas, which terrorist groups are quick to occupy and exploit to their advantage.

The impasse in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process is a good illustration. The continuation of the policy of occupation, colonization and annexation of occupied Palestinian territory, in flagrant violation of international law and the relevant resolutions of the Council, and the repeated attacks by Israel on the Al-Aqsa Mosque, fuel frustration within the Muslim community. That frustration is compounded by the lack of meaningful consequences from the international community to those violations and by the impunity that the occupation authorities feel secure of. They have also used terrorist propaganda to their advantage.

The crisis in Syria has been and remains dependent on finding a sincere negotiated political solution among the Syrians themselves in respect for the sovereignty, the territorial integrity and the unity of the Syrian people. The emergence and continuation of the conflict has opened space for the rise and development of numerous terrorist groups. They now occupy vast swathes of territory, control natural resources, raise taxes and impose their barbaric behaviour on innocent people and their ancient cultural heritage. The same thing is happening in neighbouring Iraq, where part of its territory as well as its sovereignty, security and institutional stability are threatened by the terrorist hordes of Daesh and their associates.

In Libya, the terrorist threat continues to expand and to take advantage of the lack of effective control of the all the territory by a central Government authority, which weighs on the stability and security of the entire region. The demand to counter this threat requires a rapidly negotiated solution based on respect for the sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity and unity of the brotherly Libyan people. The solution also requires the urgent establishment of a Government of national unity to enable the Libyan people to effectively cope with terrorist groups, which are progressively and dangerously establishing themselves in the country.

The scarcity of resources available to countries in these regions and their porous and vast borders, as well as poverty and lack of development, are factors that provide terrorism with considerable room to manoeuvre, develop and strengthen, despite the war that the countries affected and threatened by this scourge are legitimately waging.

Like the rest of the international community, my country is very concerned by the aggravation of the terrorist threat and the serious risks it poses to regional and international peace and security. We believe that efforts to counter this threat must be directed in three complementary directions.

First, bilateral, regional and international cooperation in the fight against this scourge must be continuously pursued and deepened. The United Nations and the Security Council have, in this respect, a responsibility and a critical role, particularly in the implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

Secondly, dialogue and peaceful means, instead of the indiscriminate, disproportionate and counterproductive use of force, must be promoted to find political solutions to these crises and conflicts. Such solutions are sure to encourage the suppression of chaos and lawless areas and to mobilize the dedication of greater and more important resources in the fight against terrorism.

Thirdly and lastly, the efforts of the concerned countries and the international community as a whole must be coordinated in order to develop and strengthen the institutional, human, technical and technological capacities of these countries, which badly need such capacities in their fight against terrorism. The reinforcement and presence of strong and capable States is today one of the condition for success in the fight against terrorism.

These are some observations we wished to share with the Council in context of this important and timely debate, whose the conclusions concern us individually and collectively.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Rodolfo Nin Novoa, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Eastern Republic of Uruguay.

Mr. Nin Novoa (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this open debate and for your efforts during Russia's presidency to achieve progress on the major issues on the agenda of the Security Council.

For me, it is an honour to be here today to exchange views on a topic of particular importance for international peace and security, that is, the terrorist threat in the Middle East and North Africa. It is one of the greatest violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as of the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and peaceful coexistence among nations and among individuals. Its transnational nature, its innovative modes of action and its growing impact at the international level demand immediate responses from the international community, and in particular from the Security Council, the body to which the Charter grants primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security.

Uruguay condemns terrorism and all its forms of action and stresses the need for measures by the international community that are consistent with the Charter of the United Nations and that make it possible to counter the operations of terrorist groups.

We believe that the responses designed by the international community should not focus exclusively on the implementation of coercive measures in accordance with international law, but should also offer solutions based on a comprehensive approach that addresses the structural factors that are at the root and origin of this phenomenon. Poverty, the lack of job opportunities, social exclusion, xenophobia and discrimination and the challenges with regard to access to education create an environment conducive to the formation of new terrorist groups and the recruitment of followers. We are convinced that addressing those challenges will also prevent the emergence of new hotbeds of tension related to the structural factors I just mentioned.

Uruguay notes with great concern the escalation and brutality of the actions of the group called the Islamic State, including the deliberate destruction of the cultural heritage of humankind. We denounce in the most emphatic way the cruelty and disregard for human dignity that this group has demonstrated. That is why, given the actions of the Islamic State, it is not possible to sustain the principle of the peaceful settlement of disputes and to demand dialogue and negotiation with an entity that has adopted a clear strategy of terror. In this context, Uruguay emphasizes the need for urgent action by the international community, using means consistent with the Charter of the United Nations, to put a stop to the actions of this terrorist group. The international community cannot remain indifferent in the face of these crimes and the suffering of their victims.

The attacks on the civilian populations, in particular on women and children, perpetrated by Boko Haram on the African continent demonstrate the terrible escalation in frequency, brutality, cruelty and virulence of the actions of this group against their own compatriots. It systemically subjects them to terror and violates their basic rights. Uruguay condemns its actions and reiterates that there cannot be any religious, ethnic or any kind of other justification to legitimize such actions. Similarly, Uruguay hopes that these barbaric actions do not go unpunished and that those responsible will be tried and convicted in accordance with the existing norms.

Uruguay supports the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and is committed to actions aimed at strengthening its implementation, as it is aware of the importance of collective action. In this framework, Uruguay would like to announce that it is currently considering the definition of a national strategy against terrorism that makes it possible to cooperate effectively with international efforts in the consideration of this global phenomenon.

No State or individual is exempt from becoming a victim of a terrorist attack. We must act together immediately to repair the damage caused to those affected and their families and to prevent future attacks in order to protect potential victims.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to Her Excellency Mrs. Retno Lestari Priansari Marsudi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia.

Mrs. Marsudi (Indonesia): I thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this open debate.

Instability and prolonged conflicts in the Middle East and North Africa continue to cause a high number of causalities and material costs. The international community must work harder in concert to tackle this issue. In our view, a political solution through diplomacy is the only way to resolve the conflicts. We firmly believe lasting peace can be achieved only through a peaceful process. We must therefore create the space and opportunity for an inclusive political dialogue and reconciliation to take place. It is important that such inclusive political and reconciliation process has no pre-set or preconceived outcomes.

For our part, Indonesia remains committed to supporting the peaceful resolution of conflict in the Middle East and North Africa, while respecting the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of all States. A myriad of issues have arisen as a result of continued conflicts in the Middle East and North Africa. Issues such as the influx of irregular migrants, the rise of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and the emergence of foreign terrorist fighters are proof of how this situation can significantly impact other regions and threaten international peace and security.

Indonesia believes that the key to addressing the rise of ISIS and the phenomenon of foreign terrorist fighters is by addressing the root causes. That is why the launching of an all-inclusive political process is imperative. We also need a comprehensive approach. While recognizing the role of the hard-power approach, Indonesia believes that the soft-power approach is important for preventive measures in countering terrorism. Indonesia believes in the importance of multi-stakeholder engagement in efforts to counter the terrorist ideology. The role of women — I emphasize — should be empowered, for they are a key pillar in providing children with guidance, values, tolerance and education. The role of moderates and civil society should also be promoted to provide counter-narratives to terrorist propaganda.

For its part, Indonesia is committed to addressing the cycle of radicalization. We have, among other things, done this through interfaith dialogue and by ensuring the teaching of Islam in the education system while stressing that its teachings bring about blessings and prosperity.

In response to the emergence of ISIS and foreign terrorist fighters, we must also strengthen international cooperation, in particular on intelligence, as well as among the relevant law enforcement agencies and legal instruments. We must also bolster the exchange of information and experience on legislation on foreign terrorist fighters, enhance the promotion of tolerance and moderation and improve border security.

At the international level, the role of the United Nations should be strengthened, including by enhancing coordination among the various United Nations bodies related to counter-terrorism, as well as synergizing with counter-terrorism initiatives other than in the United Nations framework.

In conclusion, I would like to take this opportunity to ask the Security Council to devote more political energy, vigour and time to resolving conflicts peacefully and to counter terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, in line with the mandate and responsibilities enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Børge Brende, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Norway.

Mr. Brende (Norway): War and civil strife in the Middle East and Africa are giving extremist groups room to grow into a threat out of all proportion to their relative strength. That much is clear, even if the full picture of the exponential increase in violent extremism and terrorism is much more complex. The fall of large expanses of territory to a terrorist group and the unspeakable atrocities of those brutal criminals have to be countered with a wide range of instruments, including military force.

That is why Norway is contributing to all five lines of effort set out by the global coalition against the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). A Norwegian military contingent is now fully deployed in Iraq. We are helping to stem the flow of financial resources and foreign terrorist fighters. We are working to counter ISIL's propaganda. And we are supporting efforts to stabilize areas at risk in Iraq. We are also taking an active part in the international efforts to fight radicalization and the perverted ideology of the extremists.

Being unemployed is never an excuse to employ the methods of terrorism. But if we want to cut off support for extremists, we have to create jobs and opportunities for the younger generations. In accordance with humanitarian principles, we are also providing considerable assistance in Iraq, Syria and the affected neighbouring countries. The international community must stand united in the fight against ISIL. All actors share a responsibility not to create new complications on the ground, or make any moves that could be counterproductive.

The perception of ISIL as an imminent threat to everyone in the region — and beyond — is widely shared. We should grasp this opportunity to seek solutions to the underlying conflicts. It was clear from the start that, without an inclusive political process in Iraq, ISIL could not effectively be dealt with. It is equally clear that an effective response requires credible progress towards conflict resolution in Syria. Comprises are needed to reach a political solution.

Five days ago, the leaders of the world set themselves ambitious goals for the next 15 years. Unfortunately, it will be very hard for Syria, Libya, Yemen and other conflict-torn countries to reach the global Goals. The relation between security and prosperity is obvious. Four years ago, Syria was a middle-income country on its way to reaching almost all of the Millennium Development Goals. Today it is a humanitarian catastrophe. What four years of war have destroyed, may take 40 years or more to rebuild.

Hardly any country in conflict has reached the Millennium Development Goals. Ending the conflict in Syria — and conflicts elsewhere — would be major steps towards fulfilling the ambitions targets set last Friday. And vice versa: fighting poverty is among the most effective conflict-prevention tools. If we create jobs and opportunities and let young people educate themselves and have a say in how their countries are governed, we also remove fundamental roots of instability, extremism and conflict. But the people of Syria cannot wait for 15 years. A political solution is urgently needed.

We welcome the fact that members of the Council are now engaged in conversations on what should be done. But that is only the beginning of the beginning. This conflict can be brought to an end only if all leaders gathered here remain committed to finding solutions even after they have left New York, and act quickly upon it. We owe it to the people of Syria and to our own security.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Carlos Raúl Morales, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Guatemala.

Mr. Morales (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation appreciates the initiative of holding this debate and commends the delegation of the Russian Federation for the excellent work that it has been doing throughout the month of September while holding the Security Council presidency. I also appreciate the briefing of the Secretary-General, which sets forth the urgency of resolving conflicts, especially those waged in the Middle East and North Africa.

It is disconcerting to see how a region that was no ennobled by a series of social movements that recently sought democratic changes is now dominated by instability and conflict. The consequences of the violence in the region have been disastrous for the civilian population. Sadly, we have witnessed how the continuing acts of violence, fundamentalism, intolerance, exclusion and the renting of the social fabric have become the daily life of the peoples of the region. We believe that we must all redouble our efforts to find viable political solutions to change those trends in the context in which human rights are respected and where we can bring about a better future.

Guatemala has had an opportunity to see at first-hand how often the Security Council has failed in how to address the roots of conflict. Many times that was due to the political sensitivities of its members. However, we have also been able to observe situations where it was possible to find enough political will among its members to make the necessary structural changes and thereby counteract many of the scourges that have given rise to conflicts.

Clearly, we have reached a point where we must muster the political will to address in a comprehensive manner the thorny issues that help foster the terrorist threat, such as socioeconomic exclusion, the availability of weapons and violations of basic human rights. It is these kinds of problems that, taken together, have been exploited in order to advance the interests of those groups that promote violent extremism and threaten peace and security.

In Guatemala's view, it is essential that the international community, particularly the members of the Security Council, overcome its differences and use the mechanisms at its disposal to bring together the parties to conflicts in order to find new ways to reduce violence, alleviate the people's suffering and build confidence for a resumption of political negotiations. We are aware that the Council can have a strong influence on the course of events on the ground, but ultimately peace can be preserved or restored only by the actual parties to the conflict. In matters of war and peace, the international community can play a critical role, but it is only the internal actors who can be the masters of their own destiny.

The effectiveness of our efforts in combating terrorism is linked to our ability to successfully tackle the conditions that fuel the problem. In that regard, we believe we now have a number of multidimensional and operational tools enabling us to address the issue and cooperate effectively, while taking into account the needs and peculiarities of each region. However, we should remember that it is not possible to fight terrorism with military force alone. It is vital that the actions of the United Nations and its Member States be seen to be legitimate, as is ensuring the accountability of those who execute them.

Finally, circumstances change and trends are often not linear, and both can be changed, by individuals or institutions. By ensuring a judicious mix of policies, the Council can prevent a conflict or interrupt a trend. Indeed, that is the reason for having a Security Council that is called on to act and to seek a lasting peace built on solid foundations.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Marina Kaljurand, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Estonia.

Ms. Kaljurand (Estonia): Like many nations, Estonia is gravely concerned about the recent wave of aggressive terrorism and violent extremism. Following President Obama's initiative, we gathered in this Chamber in September (see S/PV.7272) to discuss various threats posed by terrorists, especially the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), and to stress the global and comprehensive role of the United Nations in countering terrorism and radical extremism. The main outcome of that meeting was the Council's adoption of resolution 2178 (2014), aimed at blocking funding for terrorist groups and the recruitment and travel of foreign terrorist fighters. Today we can take stock of how that important resolution is being implemented. In Estonia, we have now almost completed the incorporation of the resolution's terms and requirements into our national legislation.

Our shared aim is the establishment of peace and security in the Middle East and North Africa by effectively countering the terrorist threat in the region caused by ISIL and other groups. Yesterday, in a reflection of the international community's dedication to addressing the terrorist threat, we held a summit of the international coalition for countering ISIL. We welcome that approach, since ISIL is unquestionably the biggest and most complicated terrorist threat to peace and security in the Middle East, North Africa and beyond. We must stop this aggressive, brutal movement, which is killing innocent people and resulting in huge waves of refugees.

While we stress the importance of international cooperation in combating ISIL, we should use our resources and capabilities effectively and avoid the danger of acting on parallel tracks. Estonia supports the existing coalition and its working groups, and cooperation should continue within that framework. Terrorism needs a global, unified and consistent response. Only intensive, close and well-coordinated cooperation between nations and international organizations can bring concrete results.

It is also clear that long-term stability and putting an end to every kind of terrorism and violent extremism in the Middle East and North Africa can be achieved only by addressing the ongoing tensions between various non-extremist political, ethnic and religious groups. Political solutions to the ongoing conflicts in Syria, Libya and Yemen will be key to our ability to wage a more effective fight against ISIL and other extremists. For that to happen, we must support the ongoing efforts of the United Nations.

There is one more aspect to add to this. It is true that today these phenomena all frequently appear in the broader Middle East, where the religion of Islam is unfortunately used to conceal terrorist goals. But we must address the issue more widely. As a global player, the United Nations should continue with its general approach of tackling terrorism and violent extremism everywhere they emerge and of addressing terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, regardless of its religious, political, historical or ethnic background and motivation.

In conclusion, I would like to stress that Estonia welcomes the work of the Secretary-General in the field of counter-terrorism and countering violent extremism, especially his efforts to prepare an action plan for preventing violent extremism, as well as those of the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate, among others, for organizing a full set of international meetings on this important subject throughout the year.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Timo Soini, Minister deputizing for the Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Finland.

Mr. Soini (Finland): We live in an increasingly interdependent world. Security challenges emerging in one country affect us all. Ultimately, it is the Security Council's responsibility to maintain international peace and security. Of course, we all share the responsibility to respond to security challenges, old or new. Inaction is not an option.

The situation today in many parts of the Middle East and North Africa is intolerable. I would like to commend and express my strong support to the mediation efforts of the United Nations in the crises in the region. The work of its Special Envoys and Representatives in resolving conflict there is greatly appreciated.

Our primary focus should be on the root causes of conflicts. Millions of young people are unemployed and lack future prospects, which can lead to their exclusion from economic, social and political life. Unfortunately, terrorist organizations use discontent and marginalization to their advantage. Democracy, human rights and inclusive economic development are fundamental elements in creating stable societies. The key word is inclusiveness. It is essential to use society's full potential, especially when addressing difficult social problems.

Here I would like to highlight the importance of women's full participation in decision-making. I firmly believe that we need the equal participation of men and women alike if we are to achieve sustainable peace. Religious and traditional leaders are also often important and influential representatives of local communities when it comes to questions related to peace and mediation. Finland sponsored the establishment of the Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers. The network brings together religious and traditional leaders, men and women alike, in their efforts for peace in conflict areas.

We also need decisive action against terrorist groups, such as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant. At the same time, we must make sure that all measures to counter terrorism comply with international law, human rights law, refugee law and international humanitarian law. The rule of law and the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms are essential components of the fight against terrorism.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Henryka Mościcka-Dendys, Undersecretary of State at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland.

Ms. Mościcka-Dendys (Poland): At the outset, let me thank Russia for convening today's timely debate on issues of great importance to international peace and security.

History teaches us that people will not consent to live under an authoritarian regime indefinitely, tolerating lawlessness, accepting brutality and giving up all ambition for a better life. The experience of Poland and other Central and Eastern European countries, once under foreign — Soviet — rule, are the best proof that illegitimate regimes cannot last forever.

The Arab revolutions did not create a terrorist threat. However, they created a political vacuum that provides conditions permissive to violent extremism and terrorism to thrive and gain ground. The longer the crises in the Middle East and North Africa persist, the more polarized and violent their societies become. Daesh and Al-Qaida feed on exactly those processes.

In the light of that situation, we must ask ourselves how to de-escalate conflicts, taking into account the number of external actors involved and their contradictory interests. Repeating the mantra of the need to find a political solution will not help. Nor will a security response alone be sufficient to address the challenges posed by foreign fighters, terrorism and extremism. We should work on a comprehensive response that addresses some of the root causes, such as economic and social inequalities, and that guarantees the enjoyment of fundamental human rights and freedoms. Without a broad, inclusive solution comprised of both political and development elements, the attainment of lasting peace in the region will not be possible.

In elaborating a peaceful solution to the conflicts in both the Middle East and North Africa, we should not forget about diversity, citizenship and equality, common values such as tolerance, peace and stability, respect and acceptance of others, solidarity and identity. We need to enhance capacities to prevent and combat violent extremism through the promotion of a culture of democracy, dialogue and human rights. The role of women, who constitute a large segment of society and who are mostly in charge of basic education, should also be emphasized in that regard.

We are of the view that there should be greater emphasis on the prevention of terrorism by examining and addressing the conditions conducive to its spread. The most important issue will be to curb recruitment by terrorist groups. In order to meet that objective we should primarily concentrate on ensuring a stable future for youth.

It is important to recognize that, from an ideological point of view, promoting a process of deradicalization is first and foremost the right and obligation of Arab and Muslim countries. His Majesty King Abdullah

II spoke about that in the European Parliament last February. Education, the promotion of a culture of peace and respect for others, and appreciation for the role of Christians in the Middle East as an integral part of the world's civilization are the main elements for consolidating the efforts His Majesty proposed. Some valuable projects have already been initiated in that regard. Let me mention just a few.

A good example of a new way of thinking was the convening of the Global Forum on Youth, Peace and Security in August in Jordan. The Amman Youth Declaration adopted at that meeting is the first of its kind to address youth and peacebuilding issues. It calls for the full engagement of youth and youth-led organizations in issues of peace and security. The driving principle is to create a space for meaningful intergenerational dialogue with common understanding and respect, in order to prevent violence and extremism.

Another example worth mentioning is Hedayah, the international center established in December 2012 in Abu Dhabi, with a strong focus on countering violent extremism through dialogue, training and research. Hedayah addresses timely subjects such as combating foreign fighters and countering violent extremism through education.

Poland supports international efforts to fight terrorism and radicalization. We value close cooperation with the United Nations, the European Union and our strategic partners in that regard. We have a long-standing tradition of advocating for change, in particular as a result of our own recent successful political and economic transformation. Poland is ready to share its own experience.

Last but not least, I must refer to another issue linked to growing extremism, which is the destruction of world cultural heritage. I take the opportunity of speaking in this Chamber to once again strongly condemn the barbaric acts of destruction of world heritage that have been taking place in the Middle East and in Africa. Damage to the cultural heritage of anyone means damage to the cultural heritage of all humankind. Such acts are war crimes and their perpetrators must be held accountable for their shameful deeds.

I would like also to convey Poland's strong support for UNESCO's action to safeguard cultural heritage in both Syria and Iraq, particularly bearing in mind the unprecedented support of 137 States for the joint statement on the destruction of cultural heritage, delivered by Poland on behalf of a cross-regional core group during the twenty-eighth session of the Human Rights Council of the United Nations. UNESCO builds international support for the protection of heritage in areas where it is threatened by extremism. However, a new strategy on how to reinforce the organization's action for the protection of culture in the event of armed conflict is indispensable.

To conclude, let me underscore that only through our joint and unwavering commitment will we be able to achieve a vision of a world free from the scourges of terrorism and violent extremism. Poland stands ready to continue its engagement in international efforts to achieve that important goal.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Margot Wallström, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Sweden.

Ms. Wallström (Sweden): Sweden aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union, but I would like to make a few additional remarks in my national capacity.

Let me first thank the Russian presidency for organising this ministerial meeting on countering the terrorist threat in the Middle East and North Africa.

I would like to focus on two issues of particular concern to us. First, we must intensify our efforts to find political settlements to end the civil war in Syria and the violence in Iraq. In the case of Syria, it is unacceptable that the conflict is now in its fifth year. The Security Council has to take its responsibility in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations. This bloodbath must end. Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura deserves our support in his efforts to find a political solution and urgently implement the 2012 Geneva communiqué (S/2012/523, annex).

The Security Council should endorse the establishment of an international contact group in support of Mr. De Mistura's four working groups. I encourage key actors, including the United States, Russia, Saudi Arabia and Iran, to participate. The European Union should also be actively involved. The ultimate goal is a genuine political transition that meets the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people, including the women of Syria, and that enables them to determine their own future independently and democratically.

In the fight against the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and terrorism, the Syrian regime must contribute by ending its attacks on civilians and committing to a genuine political transition. Let us not forget that the Syrian regime is responsible for the overwhelming part of the atrocities committed in Syria — atrocities that may constitute war crimes and crimes against humanity, and that cannot be tolerated by the international community.

In Iraq, military and stabilization efforts should be underpinned by a political process of national reconciliation and inclusive politics. Prime Minister Al Abadi has taken bold steps to include the Sunni community and all other groups in the governance of Iraq. Sweden will continue to play an active role in the coalition against ISIL in Iraq. We are participating in the group on stabilization, which is key to a democratic, stable and unified Iraq. Yesterday my Prime Minister pledged $4 million to the United Nations Development Programme stabilization fund for Iraq. We are a major donor of humanitarian aid, and we are participating in the coalition's military training efforts in northern Iraq.

Secondly, we need to counter the widespread and systematic violence being committed against women and children. By using girls and women as sex slaves, and rape as a method of warfare, the Syrian regime and terrorist groups such as ISIL have committed flagrant human rights abuses and violations of international humanitarian law.

This matter is not new to me, and, I think, not to anyone here either. When I briefed the Security Council previously in my capacity as the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, I highlighted the fact that my visits to the field taught me that sexual violence was often considered either as something inevitable or unspeakable, or as a lesser crime.

Now the use of sexual violence has been taken to horrific new levels, where it is not only condoned but openly commanded as a method of warfare. This issue should be kept on the agenda of the Security Council, as it is a matter of international peace and security. Sweden welcomes the announcement made by the Secretary-General yesterday on the presentation of a comprehensive plan on countering violent extremism and terrorism. I urge fellow States Members of the United Nations to support Special Representative Bangura's efforts. Sweden is committed to strengthening our support for victims and survivors of sexual violence. There must be accountability for sexual violence and an end to impunity.

If we look at the broader Middle East, there are also other conflicts, in Libya and in Yemen, that require, of course, urgent political solutions. Today we are addressing the immediate threat from ISIL. If we also look beyond, we have to address the broader security challenges of the region. It is necessary to revive the Middle East peace process, support good governance, strengthen post-conflict restoration and peacebuilding, as well as tackle climate change and find solutions to water-management issues.

In conclusion, let me say that the values of democracy, human rights and equality remain our best defence against terrorism. They can be achieved only through political settlements based on reconciliation and inclusiveness.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Sebastian Kurz, Federal Minister for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Austria.

Mr. Kurz (Austria): First of all, let me thank the Russian presidency for having convened this important debate. Not since the Second World War have we seen such large numbers of people desperately fleeing conflict areas to save their lives. Nearly 60 million people worldwide are on the move. In 2014 alone, 13.9 million people became newly displaced, four times as many as in the previous year. We are witnessing a mass exodus, especially from the wider Middle East towards Europe, mostly via Turkey, Greece and the Western Balkan States.

This mass exodus has worrisome aspects for countries of origin, transit and destination. For countries of origin, it increases the brain drain, and for countries of transit and destination, it poses a significant challenge for societies and their social systems.

We all know what the main trigger for this mass exodus has been: the barbaric war in Syria and the horrors committed by Daesh in Iraq and Syria. To respond to this challenge, I believe that we have to address the sources of the problem, and we must act in a united manner.

First, we have to confront the root causes in the countries of origin. In the case of Syria, that means that we have to intensify our fight against Daesh and other terrorist groups. Austria actively participates in the global coalition to counter the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). We cannot offer military assistance, but we have recently increased our help, sending more humanitarian aid, protective equipment and mine detectors. But we have to engage in this fight also among our societies. We have to do more to stop the flow of foreign terrorist fighters and to cut off financial support to their organizations.

Secondly, we need greater unity at the international level. Our first priority should be to put a rapid end to the bloodshed. Here we need clear leadership from the Security Council. We will be able to make a difference only in the United States and Russia pull in the same direction. We need a mandate not only for action against Daesh but also for the protection of civilians, including the establishment of safe and buffer zones. Austria stands ready to contribute to such a United Nations-mandated operation in the region.

The positive outcome of the E3+3 negotiations with Iran in Vienna offers a glimmer of hope. What has been possible on the Iran issue in finding a negotiated diplomatic solution should also be possible for Syria. Progress is difficult but not impossible. We have to actively take matters into our own hands and stand united to end the war in Syria and fight terrorism. We owe this to the victims of terrorism, to the many who have to flee their homes, and also to our own population so as to ensure their security needs.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to his Excellency Mr. Valentin Rybakov, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus.

Mr. Rybakov (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): At the outset, let me thank you, Mr. President, for having invited a large number of States Members of the United Nations to discuss such a grave and pressing subject here in the Council.

In the Middle East region, terrorism today exists in the form of a quasi-State. Basically, terrorism has become yet another type of weapon of mass destruction: the destruction of people, the world cultural heritage and the future of entire regions. Terrorists have killed tens of thousands of Muslims, Christians and Yazidis and representatives of other ethnic and denominational groups.

As paradoxical as it may seem, the threat of the use of conventional types of weapons of mass destruction is the greatest specifically in the Middle East region. The lack of progress on such issues as the ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, the creation in the Middle East of a zone free of nuclear weapons and other types of weapons of mass destruction, and the failure this year in terms of the work of the Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons - these are all striking evidence of backward movement in terms of working out a comprehensive dialogue on the issue of ensuring international security not only in the Middle East region and North Africa, but also worldwide.

Let us be frank. Today the real reasons for the emergence of the crisis in the region are being replaced, and this objectively impedes the quest for a long-term solution. Some problems are being artificially brought to the fore, and others are being skillfully hushed up. As a result, what is being formed as a multilevel parallel reality, and the primary victim of this parallel reality is the truth. The artificial, coercive imposition of certain views on other peoples and the discreditation of legitimately elected Governments, as well as support for terrorist groups, are the reasons that have led to the worsening of the already difficult situation in the region.

We are certain that for certain concepts, it is unacceptable and criminal to use nuanced tones; in this case, black is black. Terrorism mercilessly destroys the integrity of the international security system. Support for certain terrorist organizations in the fight against others may lead only to negative consequences. Similarly, the fragmenting of counterterrorism efforts in terms of coalitions that are pursuing their own political aims and the involvement of non-State entities will inevitably lead to a worsening of the terrorist threat and the threat of extremism. In that regard, we see that the only viable option is to take action based on Security Council decisions. For its part, Belarus has consistently worked to strengthen international peace and security, particularly in our region.

We recognize the primary coordinating role of the United Nations in combating terrorism, and we attach particular importance to the development and strengthening of international cooperation in that area. Belarus' participation in key universal international treaties in the fight against terrorism within the United Nations framework and its full implementation of the obligations under the provisions therein and the provisions of the relevant Security Council resolutions have created a solid foundation for further comprehensive counter-terrorism efforts. Our country is an active party to regional counter-terrorism agreements, programmes and other efforts carried out in the framework of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), the Collective Security Treaty Organization and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

In the light of the ongoing and growing intensity of terrorist activities, we would like to draw attention to resolution 1540 (2004), which deals with countering the proliferation of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons and preventing their falling into the hands of terrorist organizations. In our view, that resolution has a direct bearing on the theme of today's open debate.

One cannot forget about such forms of terrorism as cyberterrorism, given the global information and communications interdependence, which could well lead to terrorists gaining access to weapons of mass destruction. That would then be a disaster of truly global proportions.

In January 2013, Belarus, together with the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs, the CIS Executive Committee and the OSCE secretariat, held a workshop for CIS member States to exchange experience on the implementation of resolution 1540 (2004). We plan to continue holding such events on that subject in Minsk.

In conclusion, we believe that we need to note the following. Belarus calls on everyone not to forget that we are States Members of the United Nations — I emphasize the words, "United Nations". With regard to the issue of maintaining international peace and security, there are no idle observers in the fight to counter terrorism, nor can there be any. The contribution of each State to that crucial effort is of exceptional importance.

Finally, given the most recent events, we welcome the involvement of new States in actively countering terrorism, particularly in those cases when such involvement takes place at the request of legitimately elected Governments.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Aurelia Frick, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Principality of Liechtenstein.

Ms. Frick (Liechtenstein): For decades, conflicts in the Middle East and North Africa have deeply affected the lives and livelihoods of the peoples of that region. In recent years, new waves of violence have contributed to a humanitarian crisis and population displacements not seen since the Second World War, especially in Syria, Iraq, Libya, Yemen and Gaza. The terrorist threats in and emanating from that area have reached unprecedented levels, with vast territories ruled by brutal extremists. The international community has discussed Middle East issues for a long time, but often to no avail. As a result, the effects of instability are more evident and more broadly felt than ever.

The reasons for that dramatic state of affairs are highly complex. Sustainable solutions will also require efforts outside the realm of the Security Council. Nevertheless, the situation in the Middle East and North Africa falls squarely within the competence of the Council. The way it responds in that area serves as a measure of the Council's performance in general. I would like to make a few brief observations in that regard.

Many of the conflicts in the region, most prominently the war in Syria, can be seen as failures of preventive diplomacy. That is not meant as a criticism of United Nations envoys and their teams. They are doing their best in desperate circumstances. Rather, the main problem is that preventive diplomacy has often been marshalled too late and lacks political and financial backing. That situation is all the more regrettable, as we know that diplomacy can be effective in the most complex of crises, as was demonstrated recently with the agreement on Iran's nuclear programme. Proper implementation will of course be essential, and that may encounter difficulties or delays. Nevertheless, that historic deal should pave the way for greater collaboration on other strategic issues affecting the region.

The conflicts in the Middle East and North Africa are set against complex historic backdrops and geopolitical alliances. Council members frequently find their own interests at stake, which is not exactly a catalyst for effective decision-making. Yet the Council is a collective organ mandated to maintain peace and security on behalf of the entire United Nations membership. The Council is not meant to be a forum for pursuing national political goals. That is particularly true for situations where civilian populations are subject to massive crimes.

I would therefore like to remind Council members, as well as all other States Members of the United Nations, that they are invited to support the proposed code of conduct regarding Security Council action against genocide, crimes against humanity or war crimes, prepared by the Accountability, Coherence, Transparency group. The proposed code calls for a voluntary political pledge to support Council action in such situations. It is, in other words, a pledge not to leave civilians under attack to their fate. I hope that it will also strengthen the resolve of Council members to overcome divisions and enhance the sense of ownership among non-permanent members.

The conflicts in the region are also marked by extreme levels of impunity. Perpetrators of the most serious crimes fear the crimes of revenge perpetrated by their enemies more than they do trials in a court of law. We have to make the fight against impunity a building block in our efforts and signal to victims that they are not forgotten. Ratifications of the Rome Statute are important in that regard. A Security Council referral of the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court, complemented by other accountability efforts, is an obvious option. The counterarguments raised in that regard — "let us not interfere with the political process" — have frankly been overtaken by the realities on the ground.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Tzipi Hotovely, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of the State of Israel.

Ms. Hotovely (Israel): I would like to thank the Russian Government for initiating this important debate on a topic that is deeply troubling to all peace-loving countries and peoples.

The scourge of terror is not new to Israel. Since before our establishment and throughout our existence, we have been contending with an ongoing terror campaign. The Middle East and Africa have witnessed a broad expansion of terror throughout the region. Terror groups such as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIS), Houthi militants, Hamas and Hizbullah have a territorial dimension, which poses a particular challenge. Moreover, the terror inspired by groups such as Al-Qaida and ISIS has struck as far afield as Australia, Belgium, France and elsewhere. If some thought at first that the so-called Arab Spring would give rise to a newly democratic Middle East, the vast spread of terror regimes throughout the region has been an alarming wake-up call.

Israel is surrounded by terror groups. They are to be found on all of its frontiers: Hizbullah and Jabhat Al-Nusra in the north, ISIS in the south and Hamas in Gaza. Last year we were starkly reminded of the magnitude of the threat we face when Hamas launched thousands of missiles against Israeli civilian targets and tunnelled under the border to strike at innocent Israeli civilians.

Israel dealt with that huge security threat while abiding by international law, and in many cases going well beyond its requirements. Perhaps that explains why many democracies have expressed an interest in learning from our experience. One of the greatest challenges is the fact that terror groups often exploit and misuse the principles of international law in order to advance their aims. For example, in the 2014 Gaza war, Hamas turned the principles of international humanitarian law on their head in its attack on Israel, making massive use of human shields and deliberately launching attacks on innocent civilians from United Nations facilities and from playgrounds, hospitals, mosques and schools.

Like a crime syndicate, Middle Eastern terrorism would be nothing without its godfather, Iran. Empowered in the wake of its agreement with the P5+1, Iran has made no secret of its intention to use the sanctions relief to expand its support for terror, especially for terror proxies in the region and in the world. To defeat that terror threat, the moderate States in the Middle East must act together in confronting extremism and in addressing its root causes: the absence of democracy and the rule of law, the absence of women's rights and the lack of education about tolerance.

Palestinian society, where Hamas and other terror groups maintain strong support, exemplifies the effects of education towards violence and extremism. Any society in which public squares are named for mass murderers and children are encouraged to become martyrs — shahids — will be fertile ground for extremism and terrorism.

Terror has two main goals: to kill and to dispirit. Of the many things needed to defeat terrorism, the one thing in particular that stands out is clarity — clarity of purpose and clarity of moral conviction. United, the democratic world is capable of defeating the tidal wave of terror sweeping the Middle East and threatening the international community at large. To do so effectively, international norms and laws need to be adapted to the changing nature of the twenty-first century battlefield, especially to the unique challenges that arise in conflicts against rivals and those that deliberately blur the distinction between military personnel and non-combatants. In that regard, Israel is eager to continue playing an active role in the work of United Nations bodies in their international counter-terrorism strategy.

The fight of democracy against terror will always involve a balancing act between civil liberties and national security. Israel has for decades been contending with that dilemma and has succeeded in protecting its civilians from terrorism while obeying the rule of law. All countries facing the threat of terror today are dealing with similar challenges.

As Israel has learned in its own prolonged campaign against our ability to defeat terror, terror belies our reverence for the sanctity of human life and our fierce conviction to do battle with any and all who strive to defile it, even when they cynically try to use our principles against us. It is this conviction that will ultimately ensure that the democratic world will prevail.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Albert Koenders, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

Mr. Koenders (Netherlands): The Kingdom of the Netherlands aligns itself with the statement delivered earlier by the observer of the European Union.

Terrorism and violent extremism are timely issues for the Security Council, so I thank you, Mr. President, for this possibility to debate today. I will address three issues: terrorism, the Global Counterterrorism Forum and the rule of law.

The Netherlands firmly condemns all attacks by any terrorist organization. Such attacks are disastrous for peace, justice and development. Propelled into people's lives by the power of social media and the Internet, terrorism has no moral or geographic boundaries. Terrorist organizations are challenging our beliefs and values, including — and maybe especially — those of the peopled of the Maghreb and Mashreq regions. We therefore welcome resolution 2199 (2015), initiated by the Russian Federation. It obliges Member States to take steps to prevent terrorist groups from receiving donations and from benefiting from the trade in oil, antiquities and hostages. We all know this still continues. We still must implement the resolution to the letter with precision.

We need to act collectively against those who enslave women and children, behead innocent civilians and destroy our cultural heritage. On Sunday, the Netherlands became a co-Chair of the Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF) following that of the United States. The GCTF aims to reduce the vulnerability of people around the world to terrorism by preventing, combating and prosecuting terrorist acts. Furthermore, it aims to counter incitement and recruitment to terrorism. We are proud and humble to have assumed the responsibility of co-Chair. We will work closely with the other 29 members of that pioneering body, in particular with the Kingdom of Morocco.

In the past year, the GCTF paved the way for resolution 2178 (2014). The resolution was a crucial step against foreign terrorist fighters. Neverthess, the number of foreign terrorist fighters continues to increase. They come from a great variety of backgrounds and countries, including my own. There have been 210 foreign terrorist fighters from the Netherlands to join the ranks of terrorist organizations abroad.

The GCTF stands for less talk and more action in close cooperation with other multilateral forums. Through the GCTF, funds are channelled to support those who need it for capacity-building. The Netherlands recently allocated an additional €43 million for that purpose.

Unlike the terrorists we fight, we act in clear recognition of the moral and legal boundaries set by the rule of law and human rights. We take due account of the dilemmas posed by the demands for security and privacy. Finding the proper balance is not easy, but the Netherlands is convinced that the two are not mutually exclusive.

First and foremost, terrorists aim to disrupt our daily lives by instilling a sense of constant fear. In the face of those actions, we need to stay true to our own values. It means standing firm behind the guiding principles that unite us here. We know how effective the United Nations can be if the political will is there.

Sadly, the Council has so far failed us on Syria. The Council has not acted even though the Syrian regime has been carrying out a gruesome campaign of terror against its own people, even though it has fostered the creation of Daesh, or the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, and attracts terrorist recruits from across the region. These actions constitute flagrant human rights violations and abuses against the people of Syria. Let us not forget the obligation we all have to protect civilians and to follow the letter and the spirit of the Charter of the United Nations.

If we look at what unites us, we do not simply fight terrorism. We must fight for positive things, for things that hold a more universal value. I am reminded of one of the fundamental rights in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: the freedom from fear. Formulated almost 75 years ago by Mr. Franklin D. Roosevelt, a President of Dutch descent, as one of the four freedoms in his State of the Union speech of 6 January 1941, this freedom is still too often absent today. Let this be what we collectively strive for. Let us together reduce the vulnerability of our people around the world to terrorism.

That is also one of the reasons that the Kingdom of the Netherlands has the ambition to be elected to the Council next June for the period 2017-2018. We look forward to cooperating with the Security Council in the fight against international terrorism. The Kingdom of the Netherlands has the ambition to continue being a partner for peace, justice and development.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Peter Varghese, Secretary for Foreign Affairs and Trade of Australia.

Mr. Varghese (Australia): I thank you, Mr. President, for this opportunity for Australia to participate in this meeting.

The nations of North Africa and the Middle East, home to many of the world's oldest human civilizations, are at a critical point in their history as the region struggles to contain conflict and violent extremism. Some conflicts, such as between the Israelis and the Palestinians, have defied decades of efforts to resolve them. Australia has consistently supported a long-term, enduring, sustainable peace in the Middle East. We support a two-State solution, which recognizes that Israel is a vibrant democracy in the region and that both the Israeli and the Palestinian peoples have an inherent right to exist within secure borders.

Other conflicts — in Libya and Yemen, for example — may have flared in comparatively recent times, yet their root causes have been many years in the making. The underlying causes of these conflicts are diabolically complex. The need for an effective international response is most urgent in Iraq and Syria, where Daesh is inflicting unspeakable brutality on innocent people. The human costs of these conflicts have escalated to horrific proportions. The destabilizing effects have radiated across the region and beyond, encouraging violence in scores of countries worldwide.

Australia is not immune from these conflicts. Around 120 Australian citizens have travelled to Syria or Iraq, many to fight for Daesh. With our partners, Australia has responded to the crisis. We are a leading contributor to the global counter-Daesh coalition. This month, Australia extended air operations to target Daesh in Syria, building on our operations in Iraq and consistent with Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations.

Australia strongly refutes any criticism of the legal basis for our operations in Syria. Our action is designed to cut off Daesh's capacity to sustain its operations in Iraq, including the use of Syrian territory to train, prepare attacks, resupply and move fighters across the border. Article 51 of the Charter clearly recognizes the inherent right of States to act in self-defence. The Government of Syria has failed to constrain Daesh's continued attacks in Iraq from safe havens in Syria. Australia, together with coalition partners, is acting in response to the request for assistance by the Government of Iraq, and is undertaking necessary and proportionate military operations against the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant in Syria in the collective self-defence of Iraq.

The Russian Federation has advised us of its intention to undertake air strikes in Syria against terrorist targets. If this is Russia's real intent, its strikes must focus on Daesh, which, by any measure, is the most significant terrorist threat in Syria and Iraq.

Military action is a necessary but in no way sufficient response to Daesh. Sustainable political settlements are required to end the conflict. We support the efforts of Iraq's Prime Minister Al Abadi to seek reconciliation and deliver inclusive governance for all Iraqis. We continue to advocate for a political solution that can bring an end to the brutal conflict in Syria, where horrific atrocities by the parties — particularly the Al-Assad regime, Daesh and Al-Qaida affiliate Jabhat al-Nusra — have taken a devastating humanitarian toll. We support the efforts of United Nations envoy de Mistura towards a negotiated political transition. We believe all transition options should be considered.

Australia is also working to meet the humanitarian needs generated by the conflicts, permanently resettling an additional 12,000 refugees drawn from Iraq and

Syria's most vulnerable. We are working with the United Nations to deliver food, water, health care, education, emergency supplies and protection to more than 240,000 Iraqis and Syrians. This will bring Australia's contribution to help address the humanitarian crises in Syria and Iraq to around $230 million since 2011.

We commend Iraq and Syria's neighbours, notably Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey, for the burden they have shouldered.

Much more needs to be done. We encourage Member States to give generously to the Iraq and Syria humanitarian appeals. We must all support the Iraqi and Syrian people in their desperate hour of need.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Gunnar Bragi Sveinsson, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Iceland.

Mr. Sveinsson (Iceland): Our leaders have just agreed on the Sustainable Development Goals to be fulfilled by 2030. This forward-looking vision of hope makes it clear that sustainable development, peace and security are tightly related.

However, the Arab Spring, which raised so many hopes just a few years ago, has given way to a situation that, for many, amounts to a living hell. A large part of the population of Syria has either been displaced in their own land or has left its country altogether, driven out by vicious attacks from Government forces or by rebel groups. Libya is fragmented and achieving unity between the disparate factions is proving very hard. Iraq is divided. War rages in Yemen. The Palestine/Israel situation and the unresolved Western Sahara/Morocco dispute continue to fester. Security, human rights and the rule of law are heavily compromised in a string of countries in the region.

Across the region extreme terrorist forces, such as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, succeed in exploiting the situation, bringing further chaos and misery. In addition, they pose a major threat to other countries within and beyond the region, not least through the spread of foreign terrorist fighters. The fatal attraction of violence and extremist doctrines to some young people in our societies presents a further challenge.

Meanwhile neighbouring countries struggle to address the massive humanitarian challenges. Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan deserve praise for giving support and safe havens to many millions. There has been a marked increase in the number of people from the region trying to find refuge in Europe. But these numbers are small compared to the millions of refugees in the countries of origin and their neighbouring countries.

Iceland is determined to do its part in helping to address the humanitarian aspects of this man-made catastrophe. We believe it is most urgent to steer assistance to the region. By improving the life of the millions of displaced in the region, we will reduce the desperation that drives them into the hands of traffickers. The Icelandic Government has allocated $16 million to supporting the vital work of frontline United Nations institutions. We will also take an increased numbers of refugees to Iceland.

Allow me to commend the Secretary-General for holding the side event on migration today.

The Security Council has the primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security. I would like to join others in urging the members of the Security Council to renew their efforts to find ways to act together and put differences aside. I take note of the Secretary-General's observation in his recent report on the future of United Nations peace operations (S/2015/682). It states that his envoys find themselves in situations where they search for ways to initiate political processes even as Member States and regional actors reinforce military and financial support to opposing sides. The only way highly complex conflicts of the type we see in this region will be resolved is through united and concerted action by the Security Council.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Abdulaziz Al-Ammar, Permanent Observer of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf to the United Nations.

Mr. Al-Ammar (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for holding this important meeting on the dangerous developments in the Middle East and North Africa, from the Arab/Israeli conflict to the bloody conflicts in Syria, Yemen, Libya and Iraq, as well as the substantial material damage and humanitarian consequences in the region. This represents a great challenge for the international community.

The Arab/Israeli conflict has always been a major threat to the region and the entire world and has consequences for the crises in the region. The violations by the Israeli occupying forces of Muslim and

Christian holy sites causing a change in the legal status of the Al-Aqsa Mosque are a violation of international customary laws. For that reason, we call on the Security Council to assume its responsibility and take all necessary steps to protect the Palestinian people and their holy sites and to reach a long-lasting settlement that would end the occupation of the Palestinian territory and lead to the creation of a Palestinian State, on the basis of the 1967 borders, with Jerusalem as its capital and on the basis of a two-State solution. Otherwise this will remain a source of instability and the worst excuse to justify extremism and terrorism in the region.

The crisis in Syria, with all its implications and current and future consequences, could lead to a real disaster in the region and in the world. The Syrian crisis, with all the crimes committed by the regime, as well as the great material damage inflicted on the people — involving millions of displaced and thousands killed — has led to the displacement of 2.8 million Syrians. We have afforded them a legal status, granting them freedom of movement. We have allowed the children to attend schools and even to register at our universities. Since 2011, the States of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) have provided assistance totalling more than $4.3 billion. All those efforts have been made so that we can stand beside our fraternal people of Syria.

We underscore the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Syria. We are also committed to the political solution of the Syrian crisis in line with the Geneva communiqué of 30 June (S/2012/522, annex), so that the Syrian people can live in dignity. The Security Council should also fulfil its responsibility towards the Syrian people so that we can end this humanitarian crisis.

In Yemen, the best way to ensure stability and stop the country from sliding into terrorism is to support the legitimate authority, based on the GCC initiative and its mechanisms. We need the implementation of resolution 2216 (2015).

The conflicts in our area provide fertile ground for terrorism. The Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant/Daes is now the major threat for us all. Therefore, we should reach a political solution to the crises that are affecting our region. That is the best way to give hope to people.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to His Holiness Archbishop Paul Richard Gallagher, Secretary for Relations with States of the Holy See.

Archbishop Gallagher: My delegation wishes to thank Russia's presidency of the Security Council for convening this timely open debate on the theme "Settlement of conflicts in the Middle East and North Africa and countering the terrorist threat in the region".

In his address to the General Assembly last Friday, Pope Francis said

> "I must ... renew my repeated appeals concerning the painful situation in the entire Middle East, North Africa and other African countries where Christians, along with other cultural and ethnic groups, and including those adherents of the majority religion who have no desire to be caught up in the hatred and madness, have been forced to witness the destruction of their places of worship, their cultural and religious heritage and their homes and property, and are faced with the alternatives of either of fleeing or of paying with their lives or with enslavement for their devotion to goodness and peace." (*A/70/PV.3, p. 5*)

The migration crisis in the Mediterranean and in many parts of Europe has been provoked in a significant manner by violence and persecution perpetrated by terrorist groups in the Middle East and North Africa. The body of the three-old Aylan Kurdi, washed ashore in Turkey, represents the thousands who have perished in the perilous journey to flee from violence and persecution. Aylan's limp and lifeless body cries to the international community, in particular to the Council, to do all it can to stop the madness, so that other innocent lives like his may be spared from the same tragic fate. Whatever we do from this moment on will be too little and too late for Aylan and for the thousands whose lives were ended due to our collective indifference and geopolitical and national rivalries. But from now on, every action to spare even just one Aylan from death and from all forms of atrocity is not only timely but urgent. The Holy See is calling on the international community not to remain silent and inert before all the tragedies happening even as we speak and before the watch of the Council.

Enumerating the multiple and complex emergencies that the Middle East and North Africa continue to face on an unprecedented scale once more before the Council is unnecessary. But the Holy See feels compelled to echo the pleadings of the 12 million

Syrians in need of humanitarian assistance, of whom 7million are internally displaced and 5 million have become refugees in other countries. My delegation also considers it a grave duty to denounce the utterly senseless destruction of some of the world's priceless cultural patrimony in Syria. The situation is extremely grave and is worsening day by day. The settlement of the conflict in Syria must therefore be at the top of the priorities of the Council and of all the authorities in Syria and in the Middle East.

My delegation avails of this opportunity to reiterate the Holy See's profound gratitude to those countries in the region that, in spite of their own difficult situations and limited resources, have welcomed and taken care of the millions of refugees. On its part, the Catholic Church remains active at the forefront in providing humanitarian aid to all those in need with all the means at its disposal.

Flooding the region with more and more destructive weapons will not end the violence and the suffering. What the region needs are negotiated political solutions to the conflicts that continue to engulf it. The region needs those solutions now, if it is going to win the war against terror; if its populations are not going to be constrained to flee; if freedom and stable democracy are going to have any chance to flourish in the region; if the leaders of the region are going to learn to settle disputes peacefully; and if outside forces and Powers are going to refrain from imposing their wills in the region.

Any lasting solution to the conflicts in the Middle East, and indeed to all conflicts in the world, must consider the centrality of the inviolable dignity and rights of the human person, regardless of race, religion, political belief or differences. Many individual citizens and groups in the region have suffered and continue to suffer death and all forms of violence because of their religion, ethnicity or political beliefs. Terrorists must never be allowed to destroy centuries of peaceful coexistence between Muslims and Christians in the region. The lie of terrorist groups that claim to kill and oppress in the name of religion must be denounced in the strongest possible terms. How can we stand by as our fellow human beings are being persecuted, exiled, killed, burned or beheaded solely because they hold a different religious creed or they happen to belong to a minority group?

In conclusion, I would like to return to the address of Pope Francis to the General Assembly last Friday, when he said,

> "War is the negation of all rights and a dramatic assault on the environment. If we want true integral human development for all, we must work tirelessly to avoid war between nations and between peoples." (*ibid.*)

Now is the time for life-saving action.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to His Excellency to Mr. Sergiy Kyslitsya, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine.

Mr. Kyslitsya (Ukraine): At the outset, I would like to underscore that this open debate represents a common contribution to the efforts of the international community in addressing terrorism and violent extremism, not only in the region of the Middle East and North Africa but also in a global context. Ukraine fully supports the Security Council's position that all forms of terrorism constitutes one of the most serious threats to international peace and security, and that any acts of terrorism are criminal and unjustifiable regardless of their motivations.

Ukraine supports the central role of the United Nations in the global effort to suppress international terrorism and promote international cooperation in that field. We reiterate our strong support for the set of measures in resolutions 2170 (2014) and 2178 (2014) aimed at resolving the acute problems associated with foreign terrorist fighters. We share the concern that foreign terrorist fighters can increase a conflict's intensity and duration. Dealing with the threat they pose requires that the factors underlying the phenomenon be comprehensively addressed. Taking into account the presence of foreign militants and terrorists in the Donbas region of Ukraine, some provisions of those resolutions are also applicable to the situation in Ukraine.

We remain deeply concerned about the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and other associated terrorist entities and about the negative impact of their violent extremist ideology and destabilizing actions in the Middle East and North Africa, including their devastating humanitarian impact on the civilian population, which has led to the displacement of millions. We strongly condemn the crimes and acts of mass violence that ISIL has committed against civilians, particularly in Syria and Iraq, including their most vulnerable minorities. Ukraine shares the view that the activity and violent ideology of terrorist groups such as ISIL and Jabhat Al-Nusra constitute a threat to the entire international community. We support all possible steps on the part of the international coalition, including appropriate military operations against ISIL forces, aimed at banishing the terrorist threat from the region. We also believe that the fight against ISIL and other terrorist groups must be accompanied by a positive political transformation in Syria and democratization of its State institutions.

At the same time, combating the activities of individual terrorists and terrorist groups is insufficient if the problem of sponsor States is not properly addressed. That is true in the cases of both the Middle East and the Donbas region of Ukraine. Considering certain current developments in Syria, particularly Russia's military build-up and use of force there, we share the opinion that so far its policies seem to be about advancing its own narrowly defined interests, which do not coincide with interests of the Syrian people. In that regard, we are deeply concerned about the reports from Syria today that the air strikes carried out by the Russian air force have resulted in the death of dozens of civilians.

We also find it very disturbing that attempts are being made to tilt the discussion on the Syrian crisis in the direction of how best to accommodate the interests of the Russian Federation in Syria, rather than how to address the root causes of the current crisis in the Middle East, while ignoring the plight and genuine interests of the Syrian people. If we allow this approach we risk exacerbating the situation in Syria, which will continue to drive Syrians out of their homes and thus worsen the migration crisis. In the light of this, we welcome the assurances made by the leaders of the anti-ISIL coalition to the effect that further interaction with the Russian Federation in the fight against ISIL will not come at the expense of the integrity of their position vis-à-vis the Russian Federation on issues of principle in other parts of the world where Russia has been directly implicated in conflict situations.

Anti-terrorism activities should play a central role in United Nations efforts to address transnational threats to security, which have grown dramatically and are not confined within national boundaries. In that regard, we welcomed yesterday's holding, at the initiative of the United States, of a summit of leaders on countering ISIL and violent extremism. We consider it an important step towards achieving unity in addressing the global threats posed by terrorist organizations and their activity.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry, Foreign Secretary of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

Mr. Chaudhry (Pakistan): I would like to begin by thanking Foreign Minister Lavrov on his initiative in convening a meeting of the Security Council on this very important issue, which is a real threat to international peace and security.

What seemed at its start to be a spring in the Middle East has turned into an autumn of despair and suffering for its people. As we discuss the conflicts in the Middle East today, people in the region are dying, and their exodus has created a humanitarian catastrophe thousands of miles from its source. We must look at the reasons behind this desperate situation. First, the people's legitimate aspirations have not been fulfilled. Secondly, external interventions, both overt and covert, have exacerbated the conflicts. Poor governance, of course, is a common thread in many of these situations. This year, world leaders gathered here in New York to talk about the transformation of the development agenda over the next 15 years. The agenda is all about keeping people at its centre; the question is, have we actually put people at the centre? If we had, young Aylan Al-Kurdi would not have suffered his tragic fate in search of a better life.

If we dig deeper into the underlying reasons for this crisis, the Palestinian issue remains one of the primary causes of instability in the region. Without a just, sustainable and enduring resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict, peace in the Middle East will remain a pipe dream, and experience tells us that without peace in the Middle East, peace and security for all of us will remain under threat. An independent and viable State of Palestine, based on the pre-1967 borders, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital, remains the only solution.

We must ask ourselves why Daesh has become the hydra-headed monster that it is today in Syria and Iraq. Were there lost opportunities? Could the Security Council, in particular, and the international community, in general, have done more to prevent the situation from deteriorating and, more importantly, can we do something now? In our opinion, the answer to all those questions is an emphatic yes. Disputing what is past is no use. We must now unite behind the mediation efforts of Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura. Today the regional Powers, the supporters of all the parties to the conflict and the paramount members of the Council and the international community must all decide that enough is enough. This war must end and we must all contribute to that goal.

In Yemen, the country's legitimate Government must be restored, but that should be done through negotiations. A peace process must be launched based on the Council's resolutions and the work tackled at a national dialogue conference in order to chart a path to a peaceful settlement.

Violent extremism and terrorism, whatever their causative factors, thrive in an environment of desperation and frustration. What could be more frustrating than a conflict that is on the Security Council's agenda yet remains unresolved for decades? The relationship between prolonged unresolved conflict and instability is obvious. Only helplessness can emerge from protracted conflicts in which the people have been prevented from exercising their legitimate right to self-determination. The international community as a whole, and the Security Council in particular, should play a just and effective role in conflict resolution in an expeditious manner. If the United Nations cannot ensure a people's legitimate right to self-determination, who can?

Terrorism in all its forms and manifestations is reprehensible. Nothing justifies its despicable acts of barbarism and cruelty, but if we want to counter it, we must be ready to root it out completely. Fighting only the symptoms of terrorism will not do. We will have to address its causes, political, social and economic. It must be a comprehensive fight, involving much more than military might. Pessimistic arguments must be countered and hearts and minds won. Above all, a positive environment must be created in which individuals can have an optimistic outlook on their lives.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to the representative of Montenegro.

Mr. Šćepanović (Montenegro): I would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your presidency of the Council this month and on organizing this important open debate.

In addressing the topic of today's meeting, I would like to begin on a more general note with a point that I believe can never be emphasized enough. In discharging its important duty to maintain international peace and security, the Security Council might consider making better use of the options at its disposal in order to prevent conflicts from emerging. Making progress in shifting from a culture of reaction to one of prevention continues to be essential. Potential crises should be addressed before they fully break out, and proactive steps should be taken promptly in order to mitigate any escalation of violence. Once a crisis unfolds, measures based on Chapter VI of the Charter of the United Nations should be given priority.

In that context, let me single out mediation because it represents such a cost-effective tool for the prevention and peaceful resolution of conflict. But it has largely been underutilized. As a sign of my country's firm dedication to advancing the cause of mediation, particularly in the historically very turbulent and conflict-prone of the Mediterranean, which largely covers the area that is the subject of our discussion today, Montenegro plans to host the next annual seminar in 2016 within the framework of the initiative on the promotion of mediation in the Mediterranean. I remain convinced that the best and only truly sustainable way to resolve differences and rectify tensions and conflict situations is through peaceful means, in the spirit of dialogue, and by committing to diplomatic and political efforts and tools.

Any political solution has be accompanied by a sufficient humanitarian response in order to alleviate large-scale suffering and the consequences of serious human rights violations for the affected populations. The absence of those critical elements in the wake of continuing violence has a devastating toll not only on civilians, but on the international community in general, to which the Syrian and current refugee crises attest.

An environment of unabated conflict with total impunity, such as that in Syria, has an additional, significantly negative aspect. It provides fertile ground for the expansion of terrorism. Therefore, the international community should recognize its vested interest in rallying around and fostering decisive action with a view to bringing an end to the long-standing crisis — sooner rather than later — because the cost of inaction is enormous. The Syrian crisis is also a reason why Montenegro believes that cases of mass atrocities ought to be tackled with greater decisiveness by the Security Council.

When one speaks of long-standing crises, the first to come to mind is the Israeli-Palestinian situation. The persistent stalemate and status quo do not favour anyone. With the ongoing crisis in Syria and Iraq and the emergency created by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIS), the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has fallen by the wayside, and this has to change. Key international actors, especially the Quartet, should play a reinvigorated role and bring the sides back to the negotiation table. The parameters of a comprehensive peace package based on a two-State solution are already in place. All stakeholders have to recognize the potential of a final status agreement, as it can go a long way towards building trust and easing tensions between Arabs and Israel, as well as reducing radicalization in the region. The situation in the many fragile countries throughout the Middle East and North Africa — as if it were not already complex enough — has been further complicated by the presence and spread of terrorists, mainly ISIL, which now makes it necessary to seek parallel, political and counter-terrorism solutions.

In Libya and Yemen, achieving stability and countering the terrorist threat requires the creation of inclusive reconciliation in Government, as well as consolidating and strengthening the security sector with international support. For countries emerging from conflict, where peace is fragile, institution-building and institutional reform are crucial. Although creating national bodies that promote human rights and the rule of law and socioeconomic development is a long-term project, it is a prerequisite for sustaining peace. Those countries require targeted and effective international assistance under the auspices of the United Nations so that they will be in a position to protect their people and deliver basic services.

We now find ourselves in desperate need to take joint, comprehensive action against the very sophisticated threats of ISIL, which is challenging the wider landscape and endangering the very existence of certain States. In dealing with ISIL and international terrorism, it is vital to counter incitement to terrorism and stop the spread of extremist ideology. One recommendation in that regard is for religious leaders to play a more prominent and vocal role in denouncing the goals that terrorists are aggressively pursuing by abusing the values of Islam. It is worth recalling that, in relation to the fight against terrorism, the same can be said for the migrant crisis, which requires a broad approach that goes to the root-causes of the problem, rather than addressing the symptoms.

The phenomenon of foreign terrorist fighters poses another challenge that requires a resolute response. My country has made legislative changes and stands ready to further cooperate with a view to make its contribution to the full implementation of resolution 2178 (2014).

In closing, I would like to welcome the signing of the agreement on the Iranian nuclear programme, which is an important step towards enhancing regional and global peace and security. We express our hope that the conference on establishing a Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction will take place soon, as it also has the potential to contribute significantly to the renewal of trust and the lasting stability of the region.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the representative of Saudi Arabia.

Mr. Al-Mouallimi (Saudi Arabia) (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank Russia at the outset for having convened this important meeting on the maintenance of international peace and security, the settlement of conflicts in the Middle East and North Africa and countering the terrorist threat in the region.

At a time when peace is being challenged and terrorists are becoming increasingly strong in numerous regions around the planet, I reaffirm that the region of the Middle East and North Africa is no different from the rest of the world. They are part and parcel of the global fabric. If justice were to prevail and domination were to be eliminated; if neighbourly relations among nations were the rule, peace and security would follow — hence the importance of today's proposals. The settlement of current conflicts needs to draw on a rigorous analysis of the root causes, which would facilitate the search for a resolution. The conflicts in the Middle East and North Africa actually, particularly the Israeli occupation, arise from a small number of factors, including exclusion, domination and the failure to respect international law. Those are the very same causes that have given rise to terrorism and its territorial expansion.

The ongoing Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory, continued aggression against the Al-Aqsa Mosque and settler violence are among the direct causes of many conflicts in the region. The hardships imposed by occupation and a sense of despair are among the reasons that attract people to terrorism. Accordingly, the international community must act immediately to put an end to the Israeli occupation of Palestine and other Arab territories and work to establish a Palestine

State with East Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with international law and the Arab Peace Initiative that my country proposed over 13 years ago.

The atrocities committed against the heroic Syrian people, including the criminal use of barrel bombs and poisonous gas by the Syrian Government, can be counted among the reasons for the expansion of terrorism and violent extremism that are undermining international peace and security. Achieving peace and security in Syria requires a broad coalition to deal with the profound causes that allow the Syrian regime to remain in power and refuse to comply with the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex), which called for the creation of a transitional government with expanded powers. The Al-Assad regime cannot participate in any war against terrorism because it is the very embodiment of terrorism. Any resolution of the Syrian must be based on the conviction that those who have the blood of their own people on their hands cannot be part of any settlement of the crisis.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has fought terrorism everywhere and has taken part in the international coalitions against the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). The countries that now claim to be coming to fight ISIL's terrorism cannot do so while supporting the regime in Syria and its foreign allies such as Hizbullah, Saraya Al-Quds as well as other terrorist faith-based groups. In that regard, my delegation expresses its deep concern over the military operations of the Russian Federation in Homs and Hama. There are no Daesh troops at the present time in those cities. Those attacks have claimed a number of civilian victims. We demand an immediate end to those attacks, which must not be repeated.

The attempts at domination and interference in the affairs of States and attempts to worsen confessional rifts by creating divisions, such as Iran has done in a number of States in the region, are processes that history had proven to be doomed to fail. They lead to the denial of rights and the deprivation and denial of political rights and provide further ground for terrorism. Also, my country has supported the measures adopted by the Iraqi Government to restore balance in the political life of that country and to include all components of the Iraqi people in order to fight terrorism.

In brotherly Yemen we have seen how international legality has been under siege. We have seen the Iranian dictate undermining all the gains of the Yemeni people. It is for that reason that we responded to the appeal from the Yemeni Government through its President Hadi Mansour. We believe that the resolution of the conflict in Yemen entails an open dialogue between the various components of Yemen in accordance with the peace initiative of the Gulf Cooperation Council and its mechanism and with Security Council resolution 2216 (2015).

It is reprehensible that Iran continues to politicize the regrettable incident that took place during the Hajj pilgrimage. It is equally reprehensible that Iran does not show respect for the sanctity of the pilgrimage and the lives of the victims. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has always sought to insure the security of pilgrims. We have thwarted numerous Iranian attempts to carry out sabotage over the years. We express our condolences to the bereaved families of the pilgrims. We will conduct the necessary investigations and will punish anyone who turns out to have failed in his or her duty, but we will not allow anyone to attempt to exploit that human tragedy.

Lastly, Sir, the resolution of the conflicts in the Middle East certainly requires a rigorous analysis of their reasons and root causes. We also reaffirm the need to end the Israeli occupation of the Arab territories and to halt the abuses being committed by the Syrian authorities. International legality, good neighbourliness and non-interference in the affairs of other States need to be respected. Otherwise, fighting terrorism and overcoming terrorism will be no longer within our reach.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to the representative of India.

Mr. Mukerji (India): Thank you, Mr. President, for organizing today's debate. We thank today's briefers for their comprehensive briefings on this important topic. We very much appreciate your circulating a very useful concept note (S/2015/678) in that context.

The situation in the Middle East region continues to remain fragile and unpredictable, with unprecedented changes in several countries in the region. The ongoing conflict in Syria, the buildup of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and new flash points, such as in Yemen, are examples of that. Besides having implications for peace and stability, those conflicts also impose serious economic costs for the region and the whole world, which will have a major impact on the prospects for implementing the development objectives of Agenda 2030, which our leaders unanimously adopted just last week (see General Assembly resolution 70/1).

The concept note correctly emphasizes the need for politically negotiated solutions to conflicts. It clearly delineates three important measures that all of us in the international community should take in order to counter terrorism, overcome interreligious and sectarian discord, and extend humanitarian assistance. All conflicts result in the uprooting of the lives and aspirations of ordinary people, and we therefore expect the Council to invest more in political efforts to resolve them.

We are deeply concerned at the ongoing violence in Syria and the loss of human lives. India has consistently called for a comprehensive and peaceful resolution of the crisis by bringing all parties to the conflict to the negotiating table. It has to be a Syrian-led process, taking into account the legitimate aspirations of the people of Syria. There can be no military solution. We welcome all initiatives in that direction, including the efforts of the United Nations Special Envoy for Syria, Staffan de Mistura, for restarting the political talks.

Our position on the Middle-East Peace Process is also very clear. India supports a negotiated solution resulting in a sovereign, independent, viable and united State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, living within secure and recognized borders, side by side and at peace with Israel, as endorsed in the Quartet Road Map and relevant Security Council resolutions. India has always played a proactive role in garnering support for the Palestinian cause in multilateral forums. We supported the recent vote in the General Assembly on raising the flags of Palestine today (General Assembly resolution 69/320).

We are deeply alarmed at the ongoing violence and intensified militia warfare in Libya. We call for continued political negotiations. The situation in Iraq is also a matter of concern for the entire comity of nations. We are particularly concerned at the spillover effects of the instability in Iraq resulting from increased terrorist activities in the region. We strongly support the Iraqi people and Government in their efforts to overcome the crisis, uphold national sovereignty and preserve territorial integrity.

India remains deeply concerned about the worsening political and security situation in Yemen. We have been urging all concerned parties in Yemen to amicably resolve their differences, and we hope that the United Nations mediation efforts will assist the people of Yemen in finding a consensus-based solution.

It is our view that the prerogative of national authorities to resolve internal crises should be respected as a cardinal principle. We are convinced that the interventionist trend, using humanitarian concerns as a pretext, runs the danger of exacerbating conflict between and within countries.

India is committed to combating terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. India believes in a comprehensive approach to countering the threat posed by ISIL and other terrorist groups and individuals. The Council should be more transparent and uncompromising when considering and adopting its decisions on countering terrorism. India stands ready to extend full cooperation to the Council in countering terrorism.

The concept note asks what needs to be done to see that the Council's resolutions are implemented. The ineffectiveness of the Council is rooted in the nature and working procedures of this body. We must implement the mandate of our leaders, given ten years ago, for early reforms of the Council to make it more effective and representative. That would impact not only the conventional crises the Council is called upon to resolve, but even more so the new and emerging challenges to international peace and security, especially those posed by terrorism. We therefore hope that this debate will endorse action by the United Nations during its ongoing seventieth anniversary session to conclude negotiations on reforming the Council, so that the Council can play an important role in ensuring a strongly supportive international environment for our collective efforts to eradicate poverty within a generation while implementing Agenda 2030.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to the representative of Morocco.

Mr. Laassel (Morocco) (*spoke in English*): I would like to start by presenting the apologies of our Permanent Representative, who is currently receiving His Royal Highness Prince Moulay Rachid, who will address the General Assembly in a few minutes.

(*spoke in Arabic*)

I would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, for presiding over this meeting and for convening members to consider this very important subject. All of us are trying to maintain peace and security and settle conflicts in a peaceful manner and counter all forms of extremism.

We would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his enlightening briefing. We appreciate the great efforts he has made to raise awareness about the need to maintain peace and security and to counter extremism.

We are meeting at a time when the international community is celebrating the seventieth anniversary of the Charter of the United Nations, which emphasizes the need to respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States and the importance of finding peaceful resolutions to conflicts. The current conflicts spreading across the world and the absence of peaceful solutions via dialogue and consensus pursuant to the Charter have contributed to igniting conflicts among brothers who had previously lived in harmony and peace and served the interests of their nation and their prosperity.

We cannot talk about maintaining peace and security without discussing the question of Palestine. In that regard, we are concerned at the escalation that Israel has opted for in dealing with Al-Quds, especially since 13 September 2015. Israel is committing grave violations against the Al-Aqsa Mosque and carrying out incursions against, and abuse of, worshippers in blatant violation of the sensitivities of millions of Muslims and in defiance of many international conventions and agreements. Israel is also trying to undermine the status quo of Al-Quds Al-Sharif.

The Kingdom of Morocco is playing a role in these issues through His Majesty Mohammed VI at the head of the Al-Quds Committee, which supports the Jerusalemites and upholds the Palestinian cause. We will continue to support our Palestinian brothers in creating their independent State with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital. We urge that Israel withdraw from all the Palestinian occupied territories to the 1967 borders.

Following Israel's acts of aggression, the Committee was convened without delay under the auspices of His Majesty, who has also met with Mr. Mahmoud Abbas to consider the grave situation. Through the Organization of Islamic Cooperation Ministerial Contact Group on defending the cause of Palestine and Al-Quds Al-Sharif, which defends the Palestinian cause, we met on 26 September on the margins of the seventieth session of the General Assembly. At that meeting, we adopted a declaration that condemns the Israeli violations, which constitute an unprecedented provocation of the sensitivities of hundreds of millions of Muslim worshippers in the world and which could lead to additional interreligious and sectarian conflict. Such violations undermine all efforts to reach a two-State solution and only serve to increase extremism.

The Kingdom of Morocco will continue to be true in its support for the Palestinian people and their inalienable rights, the foremost of which are the creation of an independent State with East Jerusalem as its capital on the basis of the June 1967 borders, in the context of a two-State solution by which it would live side by side in peace and harmony with Israel.

All prospects before us are at an impasse. Crises are unfolding before our eyes, especially in Syria, but also in Yemen and Libya. This situation fuels terrorism, which continues to spread in the Middle East. Since June 2014, Daesh has occupied many regions in Iraq, Syria and Libya. Boko Haram is prevailing in West Africa, as is Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb. These organizations are fragmenting States and are now controlling parts of them. They have enslaved women, carried out rape, kidnapped children and the elderly, and committed massacres that are tantamount to war crimes of and a blatant violation of international law, human rights law and international humanitarian law. They have also destroyed places of worship — mosques and churches, principally — and have oppressed many minorities, even going so far as to destroy their heritage. These terrorist groups are also stalking conflict areas in order to be drawn into the fighting and thereby attract more youth to these hot spots.

According to United Nations reports, there are more than 25,000 foreign terrorist fighters from at least 100 States, especially in Syria and Iraq. These fighters are being attracted by many means: their poverty is being exploited, and the Internet, particularly social networks, is being used to tempt them. In that context, if youth finds itself before closed doors, if political and economic setbacks are all they know, if there is no governance, if there is despair and deprivation, increasing numbers of them will be tempted to ride the waves of clandestine migration. They will be exploited by the mafias specializing in human trafficking. This tragedy unfolding before us, including the drowning of people, demands that we quickly find a solution. We must find a way to provide people with decent livelihoods so that they do not turn into massive armies of terrorists.

My delegation condemns terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. Terrorism cannot be attributed to any religion, ethnic group, nation, culture or civilization. It is a criminal act. Since the attacks of 11 September 2001, Morocco has participated in international efforts to fight terrorism. We have cooperated with various United Nations agencies in devising strategies to fight terrorism. In particular, we have tried to promote the implementation of resolution 2178 (2014), on foreign terrorist fighters, and resolution 2199 (2015), on the financing of terrorism. We have also been actively involved in the Global Counterterrorism Forum, which last September adopted the Hague–Marrakech Memorandum on Good Practices for a More Effective Response to the Foreign Terrorist Fighters Phenomenon. Together with the Netherlands, we co-chair a working group on foreign terrorist fighters. Furthermore, the Moroccan city of Al-Jadida hosted a conference with the United Nations on foreign terrorist fighters. We have also adopted a security strategy and modernized and updated our legal framework as a part of our national human development initiative.

Morocco has always been involved in peace-loving efforts. We have been part of many United Nations peacekeeping operations all over the world, especially in Africa. We have supported all constructive approaches to lifting countries out of crisis. His Majesty King Mohammed VI has sponsored peaceful solutions in many regions, especially in the Mano River Basin. Morocco has also hosted many dialogue sessions among Libyan parties. We hope that an agreement will be adopted and signed soon. When that occurs, we will have helped the people of Libya to give form to their deepest desire since they achieved their independence.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to the representative of Japan.

Mr. Minami (Japan): Allow me to express my gratitude to the President for convening this meeting, and to Secretary-General for his briefing.

We continue to witness a series of conflicts in the Middle East and North Africa with repercussions that extend far beyond the region. The rise of terrorism, and the mass exodus of refugees, is a clear sign of the gravity of the situation. The effective responses against it may not be easy to ascertain. However, one thing is certain: e must not only confront the challenges at hand, but also address the underlying factors that fuel them.

Japan has been swift and steadfast in its response to the current refugee crisis. Yesterday, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe announced that Japan would provide approximately $810 million dollars in assistance this year to refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) from Syria and Iraq — a three-fold increase over 2014. In addition, approximately $2.5 million dollars in assistance will be extended to European countries, such as the Republic of Serbia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, which are receiving refugees.

News of refugees and terrorism is coming from communities where economic prospects are truncated, civilians are indiscriminately attacked and families uprooted. In response, Japan seeks to empower individuals and build economically sustainable communities. That is in line with the concept of human security that we have been advocating for decades. Therefore, the $2.5 billion dollars in assistance that Japan is extending to the Middle East and North Africa region targets not only Governments but also the most vulnerable in society, such as women and children. Women and children, however, can also work against the spread of extremist ideologies and serve as effective drivers of peace. Malala Yusafzai's story best epitomizes that. A Nobel Laureate, Malala feared no bullet in defense of her right to education. She is now an inspiration for millions. We all remember at the opening day of the sustainable development Summit, when she emphasized that education was hope and peace. Let us heed her courageous call.

In Syria, where access to education has been severely hampered, Japan has helped reach more than 2.6 million children with textbooks and educational programmes under the "Back to Learning" programme, in partnership with UNICEF and others. In Palestine and neighboring countries, Japan has long been one of the principal contributors to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, which provides education to 480,000 Palestinian refugee children.

Mothers, wives and daughters, with influential voices within the family, can serve as bulwarks against the spread of extremist ideologies. However, atrocious acts committed by groups such as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and Boko Haram attest to how women are frequently abused in conflicts. Japan will continue to support the Office of Special Representative of the Secretary-General Zainab Hawa Bangura, as its largest contributor. Moreover, we have increased our contribution to UN-Women by 10-fold over the past two years, and supported the economic empowerment of refugees and IDPs through vocational training and other programmes.

Japan firmly believes that empowering individuals and strengthening communities, in line with the concept of human security, will facilitate political solutions, which are ultimately needed in the region. Japan therefore supports the good offices of the United Nations in the Middle East and North Africa region, including in Syria, Yemen and Libya. We also look to the Security Council to play an increasingly constructive role in achieving political solutions. Japan will continue to tackle the imminent challenges at hand and cement the foundations for sustainable peace and prosperity in the region.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to the representative of South Africa.

Mr. Mamabolo (South Africa): The Security Council is meeting today in the context of growing international concern about the rise of terrorism and violent extremism, with their distorted ideology and accompanying brutality. South Africa therefore commends the Russian Federation for holding this thematic open debate on the matter.

My delegation agrees with the assessment that the situation in the Middle East and North Africa is characterized by a vicious cycle of violence and instability, fuelled in part by a sharp deterioration in the socioeconomic conditions of the region and its peoples. The lack of progress on political dialogue and the absence of a sustainable long-term solution has created space for terrorist groups such as the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, Al-Qaida and others associated with them to exploit divisions for the furtherance of their distorted beliefs. No belief system that requires violent enforcement can be regarded as an acceptable standard for civilization, and South Africa condemns such actions in the strongest possible terms. It is therefore critical that the discussions on violent extremism and terrorism in parts of Africa and the Middle East look into the root causes of the problem, and not just the symptoms.

The most prevalent cause of the current trend in terrorism and the breeding ground for violent extremism is primarily the result of unabated war and conflict in a region where for a very long time there has been a preference for military action instead of political dialogue. Other factors, including socioeconomic ones, interference by outside parties and the pursuance of the regime change doctrine by some has also played a significant role in perpetuating conflicts and instability.

As terrorism and violent extremism spreads, the international community must reflect on an appropriate response, because it is clear that our actions thus far have fallen short of what is required. Terrorism and violent extremism continue to kill and maim innocent people, damage property and infrastructure, foster fear in local communities, undermine social and economic confidence and, in many cases, entrench the forces of poverty.

The Council has a Charter-mandated role to maintain international peace and security. It must therefore be at the forefront of the efforts to curb the scourge of terrorism and violent extremism. South Africa has long been critical of the one-size-fits-all approach to addressing conflicts. The current situation in the Middle East and North Africa requires greater engagement on the part of the Council, with all the relevant role-players, including regional organizations. The proximity of regional and subregional organizations will allow the Council to broaden its approach to include important elements that can contribute to the prevention of conflict, such as cultural orientation, local preferences and local expertise in developing strategies.

The Security Council's failure and inconsistency in addressing the continued unrest and instability in the region has resulted in multiple and widespread unintended consequences, such as the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, organized crime, kidnapping for ransom, cross-border terror attacks and the bloody persecution of religious minorities at unprecedented levels. It is also fuelling the refugee crisis in Europe, the worst since the end of the Second World War.

While all these factors in themselves constitute crises, collectively they create a serious threat to international peace and security. Therefore, South Africa once again calls on the Security Council to redouble its efforts to promote the conditions for inclusive dialogue aimed at achieving sustainable political solutions to the conflicts in the region.

Nowhere has the Council been as ineffective as in the manner in which it has addressed peace in the Middle East. The South African Government believes that the only way to bring about lasting peace in the Middle East is to have a comprehensive and unconditional negotiated settlement to end the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories and an immediate end to Israel's continued blockade of Gaza. That will contribute to peace and security throughout the Middle East. We agree with the Secretary-General's assessment that we must "guard against the dangerous drift in the Middle East peace process" and that "it is essential for Israelis and Palestinians to re-engage and for the international community to pressure the parties to do so." (see A/70/PV.13) Similarly, Security Council action in Syria, Libya and Yemen should be geared towards promoting inclusive political solutions.

Thematic debates of this nature are necessary in order to ensure that, as Member States, we agree on a united strategy to counter terrorism and violent extremism, thereby maintaining international peace and security. My delegation stands ready to continue constructive engagement to uphold the centrality of the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations in that regard.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Republic of Korea.

Mr. Hahn Choonghee (Republic of Korea): I would like to thank the Russian presidency for convening this timely and important debate.

The recent developments in the Middle East and North Africa region are worrisome, even terrifying. Violent extremism spreads, feeding on long-standing frustration and grievances. More often than not, repeated calls for a political solution sound hollow, as they are not met by unified action on the part of the international community. In the face of the triple crises arising from violent extremism, deadlocked political transitions and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, all stakeholders, including the United Nations, should take more responsibility to overcome those complex and intertwined problems. Against that backdrop, I wish to make three points.

First, we need to clarify our common strategy and priorities. Few would challenge the idea that the threat of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) should be high on our agenda. The unprecedented exodus of Syrian refugees clearly shows that the humanitarian crisis has already gone beyond the critical point. It is time to move beyond our differences and conclude the debate on the best strategy to counter the ISIL threat.

Secondly, political transitions in Yemen and Libya should be inclusive and sustainable. We support the United Nations-backed political process. Assuring conflicting parties that they will have their appropriate places down the road could help expedite the process. We welcome the Iranian nuclear deal, agreed in July, and hope that Iran will play a constructive role in the region. Peaceful coexistence, backed by political will and inclusivity, should be the key for early stabilization.

Thirdly, the Israeli-Palestinian issue should not be put on the back burner. The two-State solution is the only viable option. We have consistently been against any unilateral action that could undermine that solution. We also take note that the international community has been providing more support to the Palestinian people with a view to encouraging them to take more responsibility.

On a final note, in tackling the threat of violent extremism, it is important to understand the exact nature of the challenges before us. Essentially, violent extremism is an ideology. It is a distorted and dangerous way of seeing the world. Ideas cannot be defeated on the battlefield, nor can Governments stop the flow of ideas. To ultimately defeat violent extremism, we must be able to prove that our ideas and values — such as peace, freedom and democracy — are better than those of our opponents. We must convince our younger generation that it is our free and diverse societies — not the hatred, division or violence preached by extremists — that will afford the right path to human dignity, hope and happiness.

As a way to reach a fundamental and long-term solution, I would like to emphasize the importance of global citizenship education to teach our future generation the value of tolerance, mutual respect and understanding. Our best weapon in fighting terrorism should be our commitment to human rights, freedom and the rule of law, as was also declared in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (General Assembly resolution 70/1) adopted a few days ago, in particular in Goal 16 of the Sustainable Development Goals. The Republic of Korea firmly believes that it is only through the primacy of these core principles and values that we can ultimately prevail and triumph over violent extremism.

Finally, in addressing the dire situation of women and adolescent girls in particular, the President of the Republic of Korea, Ms. Park Geun-Hye, announced (see

A/70/PV.7) an initiative called "Better Life for Girls" at the United Nations Summit for the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda held a few days ago. The Republic of Korea will contribute $200 million in the next five years to assist adolescent girls in developing countries in the areas of health and education.

The Republic of Korea will continue to engage constructively in the political, economic and humanitarian situation in this region.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): The representative of Iran has asked for the floor to make a further statement. I give him the floor.

Mr. Safaei (Islamic Republic of Iran): I am sorry to take the floor at this late hour.

My delegation has asked for the floor just to respond to the allegations made by the representative of the Israeli regime during this meeting. In that connection, I would like to state the following.

What the representative of that regime said in today's meeting was totally irrelevant to the subject of today's open debate. Indeed, foreign occupation constitutes the gravest form of terrorism. We do not believe that there is any doubt that that regime is responsible for aggression; occupation; the killing of civilians, including women and children; the crime of genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and other criminal acts. It is also responsible for turning millions of Palestinian inhabitants into refugees far from their homeland. Its network of State terrorism has a long list of deadly operations all over the world, and it continues to threaten more wars.

Also, to respond to my colleague from Saudi Arabia, as my Minister mentioned this morning, the aggression against Yemen has created a new, bleeding sore in the region and is inflicting death and destruction upon civilians, while emboldening extremist groups and providing a new space for them. Those who unleashed their armies against the innocent people of Yemen must have realized by now that no way forward exists other than by a political process based on a broad inter-Yemeni dialogue.

Once again, I reiterate that the world has not yet forgotten Saudi Arabia's complicity in the creation of Al-Qaida and the Taliban, as well as in Saddam Hussein's crimes against our people and the people of Iraq. Those were the major contributing factors in the dangerous emergence of Takfiri elements and the spread of terrorism in the region.

I would also like to mention the question of the tragedy that happened during the haj. As my President already mentioned in the General Assembly this week (see A/70/PV.13), we are not trying to politicize the issue. We are talking about the lives of hundreds of people who, unfortunately, fell victim to the incompetence and mismanagement of those in charge. Due to their unaccountability, even now as we are talking, the missing cannot be identified and the expeditious return of the deceased to their mourning families has been delayed. Public opinion demands that Saudi Arabian officials promptly fulfil their international obligations. More important, conditions must be established for an independent and professional investigation into the causes of this disaster and methods identified to prevent its repetition in the future.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): The representative of the Syrian Arab Republic has asked for the floor to make an additional statement. I now give him the floor.

Mr. Awad (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): I did not intend to take the floor again at this late hour, but the representative of the Saudi regime always insists on receiving a response to his claims at every occasion and at every meeting. Indeed, on every occasion that representative continues to introduce the subject of my country. This morning and this afternoon, we have heard that the main threat posed to the world and the Middle East is my country, as well as the Daesh and other terrorist groups, such as Jabhat Al-Nusra.

The representative of the Saudi regime said that we have deviated from the right path and that the positive effort initiated by the Russian Federation in holding this meeting deviates from the need to counter the real threat, which is Daesh. The Saudi regime plays a role in arming and financing terrorist groups. That has been clear to all — from Daesh to Jabhat al-Nusra and Jaish Al-Islam. We know the role it plays with regard to those terrorist groups. Without the role of foreign forces, including the Saudi regime, terrorism would not have spread. We would have eliminated it long ago.

I will not add anything. I just wanted to refute those false allegations.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): There are no more speakers inscribed on the list of speakers. I would like to thank all participants for their contributions to this meeting presided over by the Russian Federation.

As this is the last scheduled meeting of the Security Council for the month of September 2015, before adjourning the meeting I would like to express the sincere appreciation of the delegation of the Russian Federation to the members of the Council, especially the Permanent Representatives, their respective staff and the secretariat of the Security Council, as well as to the conference services, the interpreters and security staff, who have reliably ensured our security in this trying month. We could not have done it alone, of course, without the hard work, support and positive contributions of every delegation and the representatives of the Secretariat. As we end our presidency, I know I speak on behalf of the entire Security Council in wishing the delegation of Spain good luck in its work during the month of October.

The meeting rose at 6.35 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.7528

Security Council

Seventieth year

Provisional

7528th meeting

Tuesday, 6 October 2015, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Oyarzun Marchesi	(Spain)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Lucas
	Chad	Mr. Cherif
	Chile	Mr. Barros Melet
	China	Mr. Zhao Yong
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Jordan	Mrs. Kawar
	Lithuania	Ms. Murmokaitė
	Malaysia	Mr. Ibrahim
	New Zealand	Mr. Van Bohemen
	Nigeria	Mr. Sarki
	Russian Federation	Mr. Iliichev
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Wilson
	United States of America	Ms. Power
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Méndez Graterol

Agenda

The situation in Mali

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali (S/2015/732)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Expression of thanks to the outgoing President

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): As this is the first formal meeting of the Security Council for the month of October, I should like to take this opportunity to express my personal thanks and those of the members of the Council to the outgoing President and the Russian delegation for the excellent work performed not only by the Head of the Russian Mission, Ambassador Vitaly Churkin, but by his entire team, because, in the final analysis, the Security Council's work is about the teamwork of the 15 members of this important principal organ of the United Nations. Furthermore, they did a very good job in a special month, in which the presidency of the Council coincided with the opening of the General Assembly at its seventieth session and the major task of establishing the development agenda for the next 15 years.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Mali

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali (S/2015/732)

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Mali to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Mongi Hamdi, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2015/732, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali.

I now give the floor to Mr. Hamdi.

Mr. Hamdi (*spoke in French*): I am honoured to brief the Security Council on the latest report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali (S/2015/732). Today I would like to give the Council an overview on developments in the political, security and humanitarian situation and summarize the actions being taken and efforts made to implement the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali.

The signing of the Agreement by the Coordination des mouvements de l'Azawad (CMA), which I noted in my most recent briefing (see S/PV.7468), marked the beginning of its implementation phase. Immediately after 20 June, Algeria, as leader of the international mediation efforts, officially launched the Comité de suivi de l'accord. Since then, the Comité de suivi de l'accord has held five meetings and established its rules of procedure. At its third meeting, it set up four subcommittees, and at the fourth, the Government of Mali presented an action plan for implementation of the Agreement, including a contingency plan for the interim period.

In that regard, in line with its mandate from the Council, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) is currently developing a reconfiguration plan for supporting implementation of the Agreement. In addition, it is creating a structure, based on existing resources, that will provide technical, administrative and logistical support to the Comité de suivi de l'accord and its subcommittees. Those efforts will be closely coordinated and synergized with every component of the Mission and the United Nations system.

At my last briefing, I said that the path to peace and implementation of the Agreement would be strewn with obstacles, and that is indeed the case. The difficulties we have encountered have been more significant and have appeared sooner than we foresaw. In the three months since the final signing of the Agreement on 20 June, there have been serious setbacks to the implementation schedule. These were caused mainly by frequent violations of the ceasefire, in a context characterized by the actions of terrorist groups and activities related to the illicit transnational trafficking. Violations of the ceasefire have limited progress in the implementation of the Agreement. Valuable time was lost, as discussed at the ministerial meeting on 1 October on the Malian peace process, held in the margins of the General Assembly.

The takeover of Anéfis by the Platform on 17 August was a clear violation of the peace Agreement and led the CMA to suspend its participation in the Comité de suivi de l'accord. Any progress on crucial issues, especially related to the cantonment, was halted. While the Platform was present in Anéfis, CMA has expanded its presence in areas of the Timbuktu region, also in violation of the Agreement. After the withdrawal of the Platform from Anéfis in mid-September, its forces took positions further to the north. These movements have exacerbated tensions with CMA and led to clashes in the area of In-Khalil, near the Algerian border.

(*spoke in English*)

Throughout this period, MINUSMA directed political and military efforts to overcome these challenges. First, military resources were directed to the protection of civilians in Kidal and Anéfis. Secondly, an enhanced effort was undertaken to survey the movement of armed groups. Thirdly and most importantly, in order to address violations of the ceasefire, which often lead to serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, I used my good offices to persuade the parties to abide by their commitments and avoid an escalation of tensions.

It bears particular mention that, on 28 August, President Keïta called for the Platform's unconditional withdrawal from Anéfis. His determined efforts, added to those of MINUSMA and the rest of the international community, succeeded in persuading the Platform to eventually withdraw. The return of CMA to Anéfis on 18 September was not coordinated in the context of the Commission technique mixte de sécurité, as sought by the international mediation. CMA's return to Anéfis, although justified according to the provisions of the disengagement plan, raised tensions unnecessarily at a time during which the paramount goal was to ensure that the parties returned to "the logic of the peace Agreement".

When confrontation broke out near In-Khalil at the beginning of September, MINUSMA was deeply concerned that it could lead to the end of the peace process. In response, I called on the leadership of CMA and the Platform and met with them separately to address the situation. On 23 September, I facilitated a joint meeting in Bamako of the Platform and CMA leadership to break the political stalemate. This involved MINUSMA bringing together for the first time the top military leadership of both movements. At that meeting, the parties agreed on the following.

First, that they would cease hostilities, including provocative troop deployments. Secondly, they would return in principle to their initial positions prior to the 20 June signature of the peace Agreement. Thirdly, they would return to the peace process, including participation in the Comité de suivi de l'accord and its subsidiary bodies. Fourthly, the would agree on the circulation of people without arms. Lastly, there was a general agreement to continue dialogue among the communities and to resolve problems peacefully.

I am pleased to report that the ceasefire and the terms of these agreements are now holding. CMA and Platform have continued discussions and participated in a joint visit, together with Government ministers, to Anéfis on 27 and 28 September.

The difficulties of these past two months show the importance of determined international engagement to prevent escalation and bring the peace process back on track. They also show the urgent need to make decided progress in the work of the institutions established by the peace Agreement. The international community, with MINUSMA playing a key role, must remain engaged in political efforts to defuse tensions. There is a particularly urgent need to advance in the cantonment process, and that is in fact happening now. Reconnaissance missions of cantonment sites proposed by the Platform are ongoing. As soon as CMA turns in its proposed sites, similar reconnaissance missions will take place.

Over the past few months, criminals, along with opportunistic elements, have been resorting to looting and banditry. This fosters insecurity and fear among the population, while reducing faith in the peace process. In some cases, there have been calls for the formation of self-defence groups — a move that could create added security challenges further down the line. The priority at present is to rebuild trust among the Malian parties and to promote national reconciliation and fight against impunity. To this end, MINUSMA is supporting a conference of national understanding, to be organized by the Government of Mali.

Redress for victims of human rights and humanitarian law violations is key to the consolidation of peace and national reconciliation. Those responsible for serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law must be held accountable. I welcome the commitment of the Malian authorities to establishing transitional justice mechanisms, and call for a more transparent and inclusive process that places victims at the centre of discussions.

To contribute to a more secure environment, MINUSMA is seeking to deploy longer-range unmanned aerial vehicles. It also hopes to free up troops previously dedicated to the protection of supply lines through the deployment of a combat convoy battalion. These moves would help the Mission to expand its presence in key areas of the north and to take timely, dissuasive action within the framework of its mandate.

I also appeal to troop- and police-contributing countries to provide elements with appropriate equipment to allow MINUSMA to reach its mandated force and police levels. In order to ensure gender mainstreaming within the Mission, troop- and police-contributing countries are encouraged to include women in the contingents. The deployment of military observers, most of whom are expected to be operational by the middle of this month, will help in the task of observing and reporting on ceasefire violations. In light of recent experience, such reports could form the basis for discussions on implementing sanctions against spoilers of the peace Agreement.

I would like to stress the importance of statements coming from the Council on its support for MINUSMA and its role in the implementation of the peace process. I welcome the conclusions of the aforementioned ministerial consultative meeting on the Malian peace process, which took note of the Security Council's readiness to consider targeted sanctions against those obstructing or threatening the implementation of the Agreement.

There is a strong need to ensure the delivery of peace dividends, especially to the population of conflict-affected areas. MINUSMA has been seeking to provide improved water access, supporting expanded electricity supply, ensuring the return to school of children whose education has been thwarted by the conflict, and encouraging the voluntary return of internally displaced persons or refugees to their communities of origin. In that regard, I am pleased to note the efforts of the Government, in cooperation with MINUSMA, to help children from Timbuktu and Gao to return to school, while kids from Kidal are expected to go back to school by the middle of this month.

In addition, it is imperative to involve civil society closely in this phase of implementation, including women, youth, and traditional leaders, ensuring broad ownership of the peace Agreement. MINUSMA is strongly committed to raising awareness and disseminating the peace Agreement, in partnership with civil society.

While we regret the delays in the implementation of some provisions of the Agreement, it is important to stress that the concerted action of MINUSMA, the Government of Mali and the international mediation was successful in bringing the parties back to the logic of the peace Agreement. I also take note of the recent decision of the Malian authorities to postpone local elections. The postponement offers an opportunity to bring the electoral calendar in line with the terms outlined in the peace Agreement.

In closing, the peace process is back on track. Nonetheless, vigilance will be required, since the peace process remains fragile. It is my strong conviction that promoting the implementation agreement through close support to the Government provides the best opportunity for Mali to address its multiple challenges.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Mali.

Mr. Kassé (Mali) (*spoke in French*): Allow me at the outset to convey the warm congratulations of the delegation of Mali on the Kingdom of Spain's assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of October. At the same time, I commend the delegation of the Russian Federation for its outstanding leadership of the Council's work last month.

On behalf of the President of the Republic, His Excellency Mr. Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta, and the people and Government of Mali, I wish to pay a ringing tribute to the men and women of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), under the leadership of Mr. Mongi Hamdi, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of MINUSMA.

In the framework of the search for a solution to the crisis in Mali, we are always extremely pleased to recognize the efforts of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, as well as those of Algeria, leader of the international mediation process and Chair of the Comité de suivi de l'accord, the African Union, the Economic Community of Western African States, the European Union, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, France, Burkina Faso, Mauritania, Nigeria, the Niger, Chad and the United States of America.

Before proceeding any further, I wish to pay my deepest respects to the memory of all victims — civilian and military, national and foreign — of the Malian crisis.

The delegation of Mali takes note of the report of the Secretary-General before us (S/2015/7321), which is devoted to the situation in our country, and commends the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for introducing it.

Since the signing in May and June of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, the Government of Mali, with the support of its partners, has set about its implementation. Among the accomplishments to date, I would like to mention the following actions.

First, the adoption in June by the Council of Ministers of documents establishing regional development agencies, in application of article 40 of the Agreement; secondly, the establishment of a national coordination mechanism for implementation of the Agreement under the auspices of the Prime Minister, our Head of Government, in order to better coordinate the action of the various State authorities involved in implementing the Agreement; the provision of a headquarters for the Comité de suivi de l'Accord, with renovation work to begin shortly and the Government contributing to the relevant costs; the Government's decision to postpone local and regional elections with a view to promoting calm and to allowing for an inclusive preparatory process with the participation of all concerned stakeholders, in response to a strong request from our political parties and civil society; and the appointment in August of the Chair of the Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission, in accordance with article 46 of the Agreement, with the remaining members of the Commission to be named shortly.

Also in the context of the initiatives and action undertaken by the Government, I would like to stress the pursuit and strengthening of dialogue within and outside the Comité de suivi de l'Accord. In that regard, the Government has held numerous meetings with all stakeholders in the process in order to anticipate the difficulties ahead and to assist in resolving those that arise. To give just one example, with the agreement of all concerned parties, three members of the Government traveled to Anéfis, in the region of Kidal, between 25 and 29 September with the aim of putting an end to clashes on the ground and to establish outreach commissions for the population and armed groups aimed at re-establishing peace and advancing the reconciliation process among the three regions. A meeting for the signing of a peace agreement between and within communities is expected to be held in the coming weeks and to be countersigned by the Government. Moreover, in September, the Government held a meeting in Bamako with representatives of the Mbéra refugee camp in Mauritania to discuss possible mechanisms for their return to Mali.

Alongside the actions I have just mentioned, the Malian Government has worked to share the dividends of peace with the populations that were hardest hit. Schools in Gao and Timbuktu reopened on 1 October. I am especially pleased to announce the reopening of schools in Kidal, scheduled for mid-October, just a few days from now, after three long years during which classes in that region were suspended. In addition, the anti-malaria campaign resumed on 1 October in the region of Kidal.

Moreover, again with a view to advancing progress and promoting peace, the Government has taken a number of confidence-building measures, including an exchange of prisoners with armed movements, in partnership with MINUSMA and with its support, along with that of France's Opération Barkhane and human rights organizations. That exchange involved 16 soldiers from the Malian armed forces and 32 from armed groups. Another wave of releases is expected in the next few days.

In addition, in application of article 38 of the Agreement, the Government has moved ahead with the development and presentation to the Comité de suivi de l'accord of a global action plan for the implementation of the Agreement and an emergency plan for the interim period, both of which detail the entirety of the activities provided for by the Agreement as well as the coordination and implementation mechanisms for those action plans. The implementation of the emergency plans, which have already been finalized with the armed movements and Mali's technical and financial partners, begins this month.

Finally, with a view to making better use of the peace process for the people of Mali as a whole, the Government has embarked on a communications campaign targeting institutional and non-institutional actors through a number of campaigns aimed at disseminating information and raising awareness.

The optimism created by the signing and the first phase of implementation of the Agreement has unfortunately been dampened for several months by the persistence of a number of threats and challenges that remain to be addressed. The challenges include terrorism, drug trafficking and all other forms of organized crime in the region of the Sahel-Sahara. The criminal activities of terrorist groups and drug traffickers indiscriminately target peaceful civilians, the Malian armed forces and the international forces of MINUSMA and France, with a toll of fatalities, casualties and material damage. Such threats, which are frequently cross-border, concern all the countries of the Sahel and beyond. It is therefore time to urge the Security Council once again to support the decision of the Heads of States member of the Nouakchott Process to create a rapid response intervention force.

The delays observed in the implementation of the Agreement derive essentially from ongoing incidents on the ground and from multiple violations of the ceasefire by certain actors who are nonetheless signatories of the Agreement. The Government has consistently condemned all violations of the Agreement and has called for independent investigations in order to identify those responsible and punish the perpetrators. However, I would like to stress emphatically that such incidents should not serve as a pretext for armed movements that have signed the Agreement to hold the peace process hostage.

On the contrary, such incidents underscore the need and the urgency to move forward with the activation of the security mechanisms provided for by the Agreement with regard to overseeing and monitoring violations of the ceasefire. This concerns in particular the activation and launch of the Operational Coordination Mechanism and the Commission technique mixte de sécurité.

These incidents are a clear reminder of the pressing need for the implementation of the provisions of the Agreement on cantonment, security-sector reform, and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, whose subcommittee is co-chaired by the United Nations.

Another major challenge lies in mobilizing the resources necessary for the effective and comprehensive implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali. To that end, the Government has planned, as part of its 2015 budget, to allocate the sum of 11.4 billion CFA francs, that is, more than $19 million, including for emergency action during the interim period such as humanitarian work, the return of refugees and displaced persons, and so on.

Similarly, the Government, in order to meet its commitments stemming from the Agreement, has planned over the next five years a budgetary allocation that would be considerably more significant; the exact figure will be announced during the conference that is to take place at the headquarters of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development in Paris on 22 October.

I would like to take this opportunity to call on all partners, bilateral, multilateral and private, to participate in large numbers in the mobilization conference for financing-for-development partners in Mali and to make pledges that are commensurate with the pressing needs in the area of peace and security in Mali, in the Sahel and the rest of the world.

By way of conclusion, I would like to reiterate the need to accelerate the implementation of the measures provided for by the Agreement in the area of security and to invite the international community to strengthen the leadership of the Government of Mali in the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers. I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 10.30 a.m.